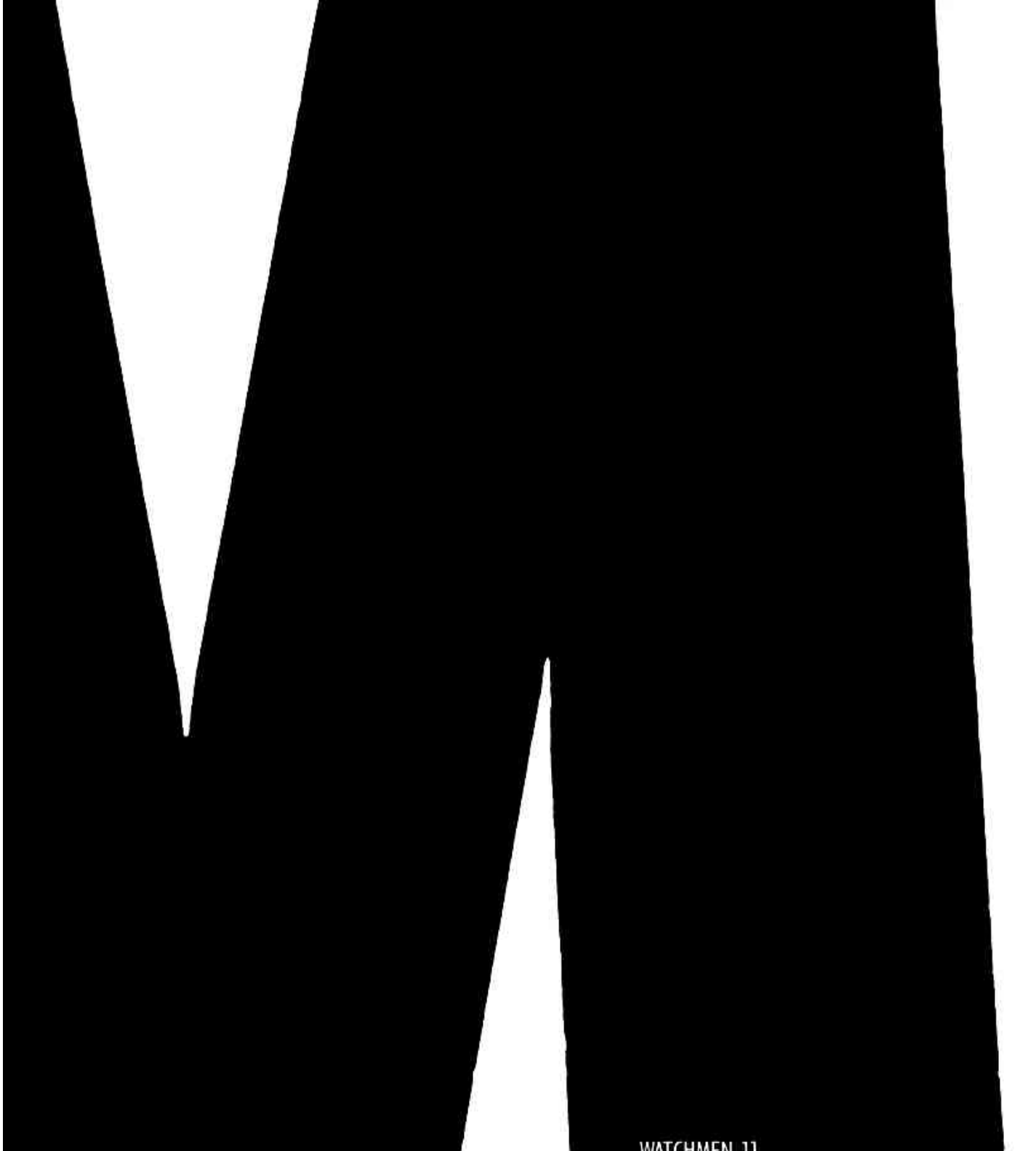
WATCHMEN
No. 11 of 12 $1.50 $2.10/CAN.

WATCHMEN

AUGUST 1987



WATCHMEN 11
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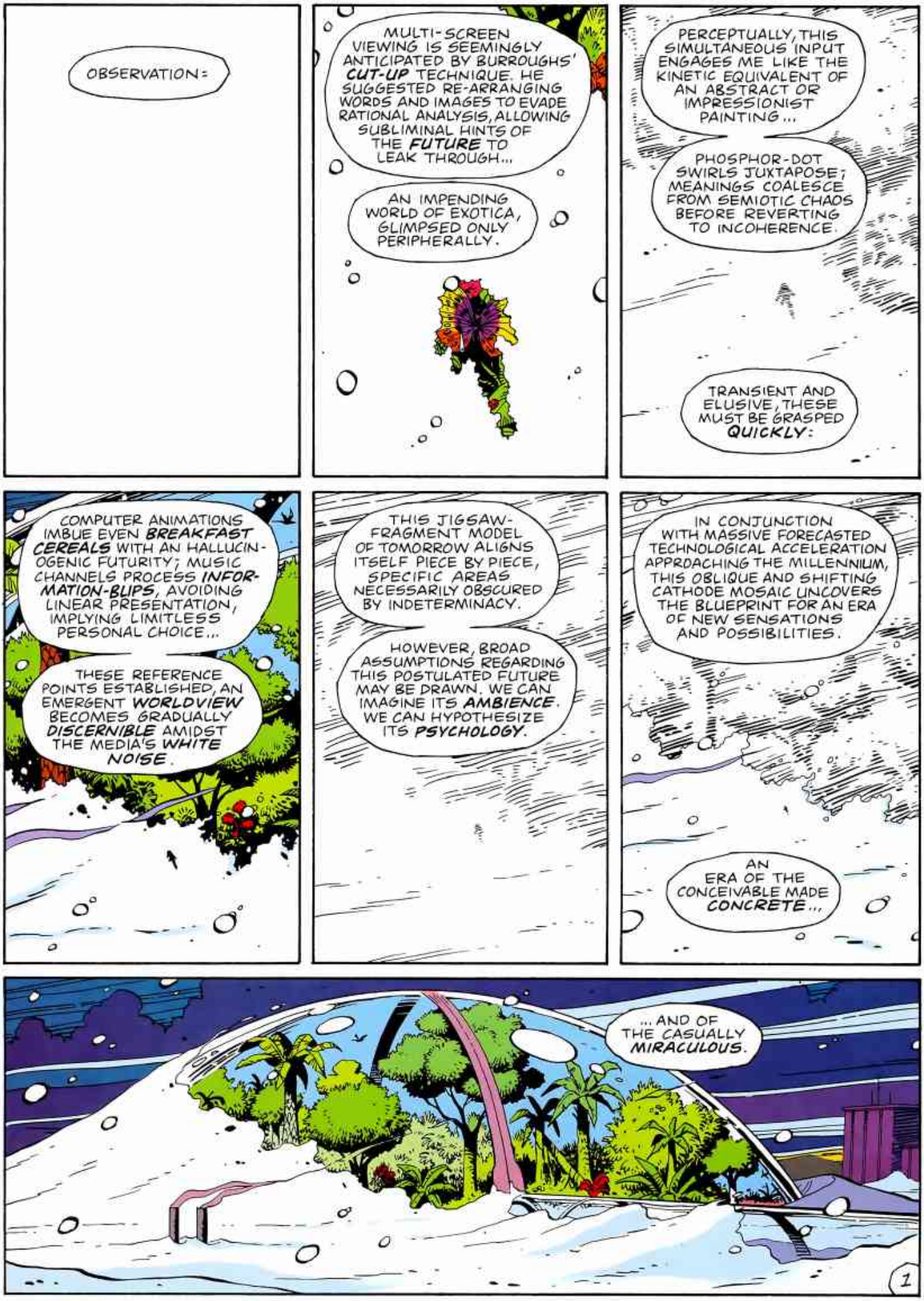
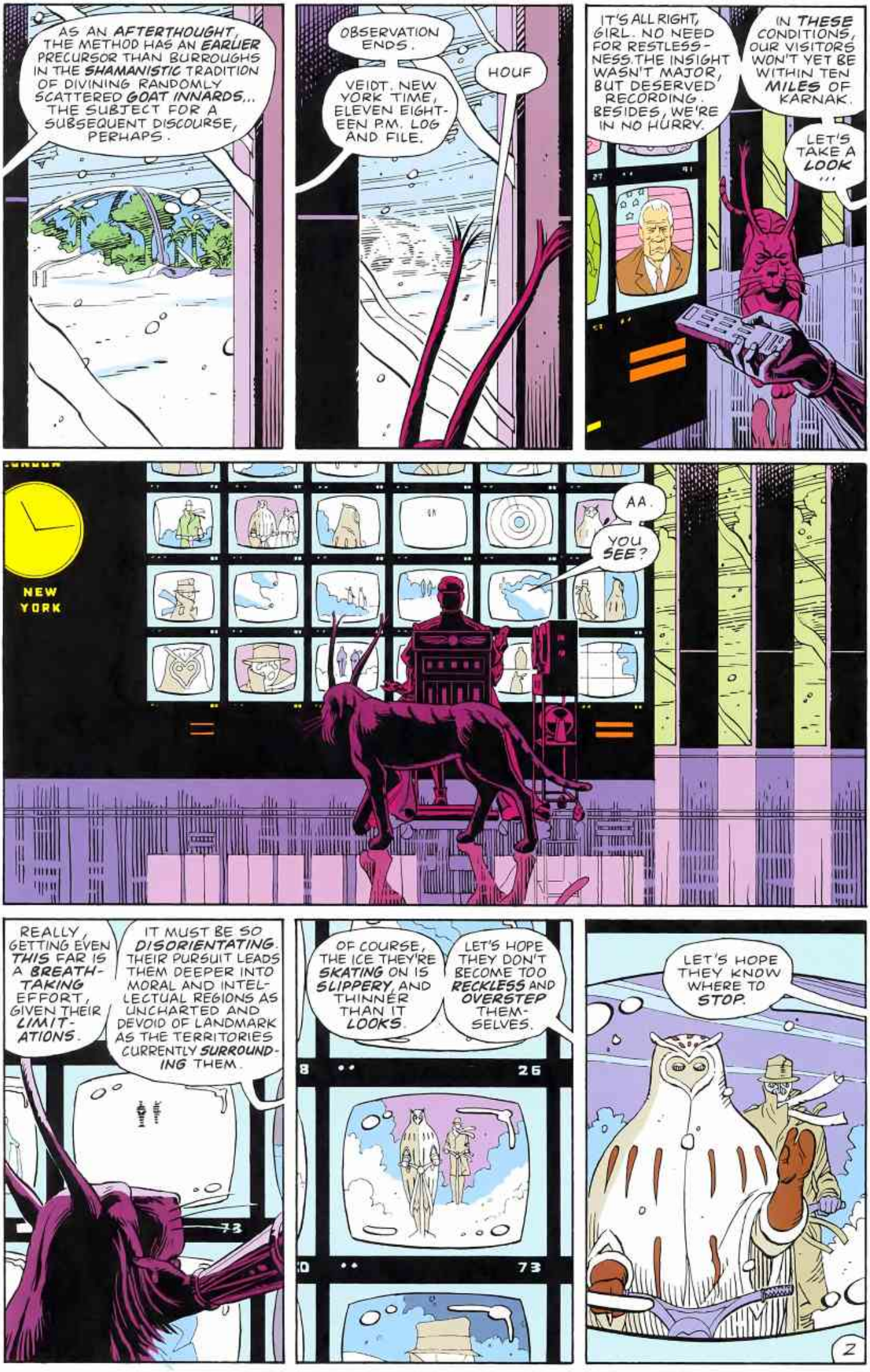
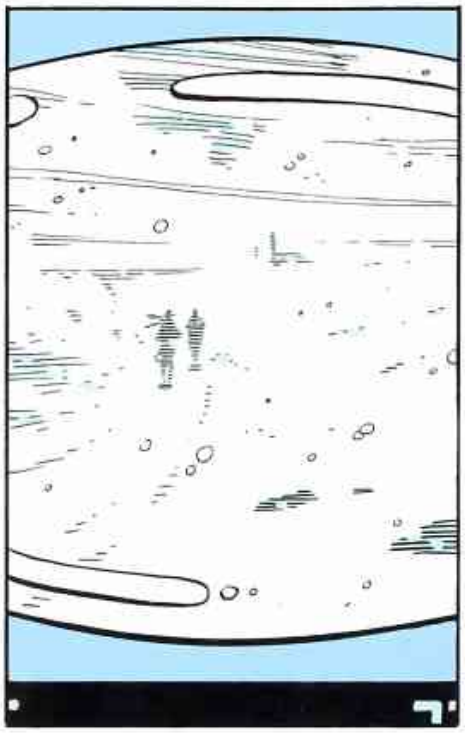

OBSERVATION:
MULTI-SCREEN VIEWING IS SEEMINGLY ANTICIPATED BY BURROUGHS' CUT-UP TECHNIQUE. HE SUGGESTED RE-ARRANGING WORDS AND IMAGES TO EVADE RATIONAL ANALYSIS, ALLOWING SUBLIMINAL HINTS OF THE FUTURE TO LEAK THROUGH...
AN IMPENDING WORLD OF EXOTICA, GLIMPSED ONLY PERIPHERALLY.
PERCEPTUALLY, THIS SIMULTANEOUS INPUT ENGAGES ME LIKE THE KINETIC EQUIVALENT OF AN ABSTRACT OR IMPRESSIONIST PAINTING...
PHOSPHOR-DOT SWIRLS JUXTAPOSE; MEANINGS COALESCE FROM SEMIOTIC CHAOS BEFORE REVERTING TO INCOHERENCE.
TRANSIENT AND ELUSIVE, THESE MUST BE GRASPED QUICKLY:
COMPUTER ANIMATIONS IMBUE EVEN BREAKFAST CEREALS WITH AN HALLUCINOGENIC FUTURITY; MUSIC CHANNELS PROCESS INFORMATION-BLIPS, AVOIDING LINEAR PRESENTATION, IMPLYING LIMITLESS PERSONAL CHOICE...
THESE REFERENCE POINTS ESTABLISHED, AN EMERGENT WORLDVIEW BECOMES GRADUALLY DISCERNIBLE AMIDST THE MEDIA'S WHITE NOISE.
THIS JIGSAW-FRAGMENT MODEL OF TOMORROW ALIGNS ITSELF PIECE BY PIECE, SPECIFIC AREAS NECESSARILY OBSCURED BY INDETERMINACY.
HOWEVER, BROAD ASSUMPTIONS REGARDING THIS POSTULATED FUTURE MAY BE DRAWN. WE CAN IMAGINE ITS AMBIENCE. WE CAN HYPOTHESIZE ITS PSYCHOLOGY.
IN CONJUNCTION WITH MASSIVE FORECASTED TECHNOLOGICAL ACCELERATION APPROACHING THE MILLENNIUM, THIS OBLIQUE AND SHIFTING CATHODE MOSAIC UNCOVERS THE BLUEPRINT FOR AN ERA OF NEW SENSATIONS AND POSSIBILITIES.
AN ERA OF THE CONCEIVABLE MADE CONCRETE...
... AND OF THE CASUALLY MIRACULOUS.
1

LOOK ON MY WORKS, YE MIGHTY...


AS AN AFTERTHOUGHT, THE METHOD HAS AN EARLIER PRECURSOR THAN BURROUGHS IN THE SHAMANISTIC TRADITION OF DIVINING RANDOMLY SCATTERED GOAT INNARDS... THE SUBJECT FOR A SUBSEQUENT DISCOURSE, PERHAPS.
OBSERVATION ENDS.
VEIDT. NEW YORK TIME, ELEVEN EIGHTEEN P.M. LOG AND FILE.
HOUF
IT'S ALL RIGHT, GIRL. NO NEED FOR RESTLESSNESS. THE INSIGHT WASN'T MAJOR, BUT DESERVED RECORDING. BESIDES, WE'RE IN NO HURRY.
IN THESE CONDITIONS, OUR VISITORS WON'T YET BE WITHIN TEN MILES OF KARNAK.
LET'S TAKE A LOOK ...
NEW YORK
AA.
YOU SEE?
REALLY, GETTING EVEN THIS FAR IS A BREATHTAKING EFFORT, GIVEN THEIR LIMITATIONS.
IT MUST BE SO DISORIENTATING. THEIR PURSUIT LEADS THEM DEEPER INTO MORAL AND INTELLECTUAL REGIONS AS UNCHARTED AND DEVOID OF LANDMARK AS THE TERRITORIES CURRENTLY SURROUNDING THEM.
OF COURSE, THE ICE THEY'RE SKATING ON IS SLIPPERY, AND THINNER THAN IT LOOKS.
LET'S HOPE THEY DON'T BECOME TOO RECKLESS AND OVERSTEP THEMSELVES.
LET'S HOPE THEY KNOW WHERE TO STOP.
2

OKAY... THERE IT IS, UP AHEAD.
LOOKS LIKE THERE'S NO OPTION OTHER THAN A DIRECT APPROACH. WE CAN'T CREEP UP WITHOUT COVER, AND IT'S POINTLESS WAITING FOR DARKNESS UP HERE...
THERE ISN'T ANY.
UNTRUE. JUST ISN'T ANY OF KIND WE CAN USE.
IF VEIDT TRULY ENGINEERING THIRD WORLD WAR, WE ARE APPROACHING HEART OF DARKNESS.
HMM. I'VE BEEN WONDERING ABOUT THAT...
THOSE BROCHURES, ALL THAT CRAP WE TOOK FROM HIS DESK... THE TONE WAS WRONG, SOMEHOW.
NOT OPTIMISTIC EXACTLY, BUT... WELL, PLANNING FOR A FUTURE.
IT DIDN'T READ LIKE SOMEONE OUT TO CARVE A HEADSTONE FOR HUMANITY.
... AND ANYWAY, THIS IS ADRIAN, FOR GOD'S SAKE! WE KNOW HIM. HE NEVER KILLED ANYBODY, EVER. WHY WOULD HE WANT TO DESTROY THE WORLD?
RONCH
RONCH
RONCH
INSANITY, PERHAPS?
HA. WELL, THAT'S A TRICKY ONE...
I MEAN, WHO'S QUALIFIED TO JUDGE SOMETHING LIKE THAT? THIS IS THE WORLD'S SMARTEST MAN WE'RE TALKING ABOUT HERE, SO HOW CAN YOU TELL?
HOW CAN ANYONE TELL IF HE'S GONE CRAZY?
3

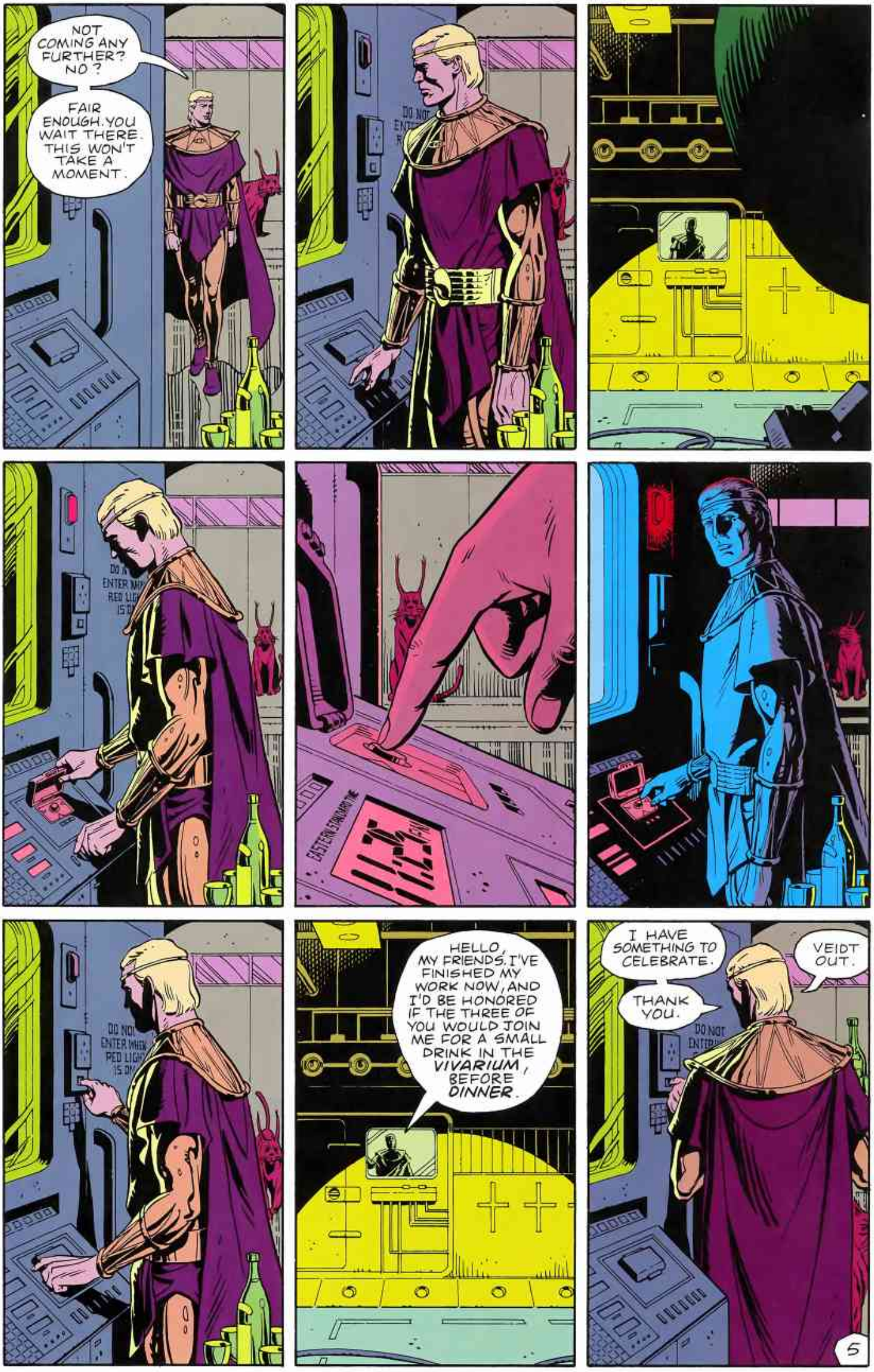


98
22

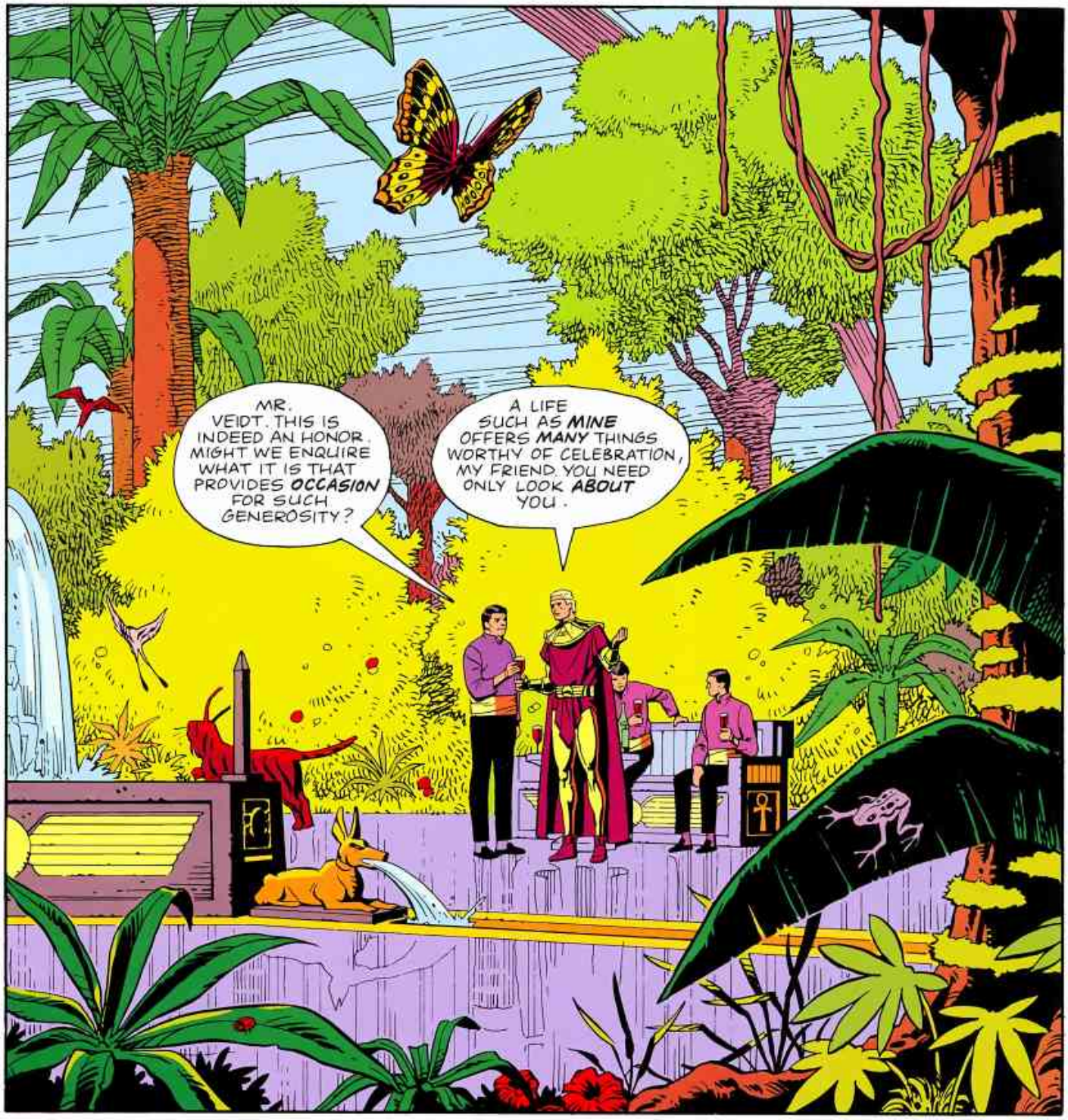
HHAHHH
AH WELL.

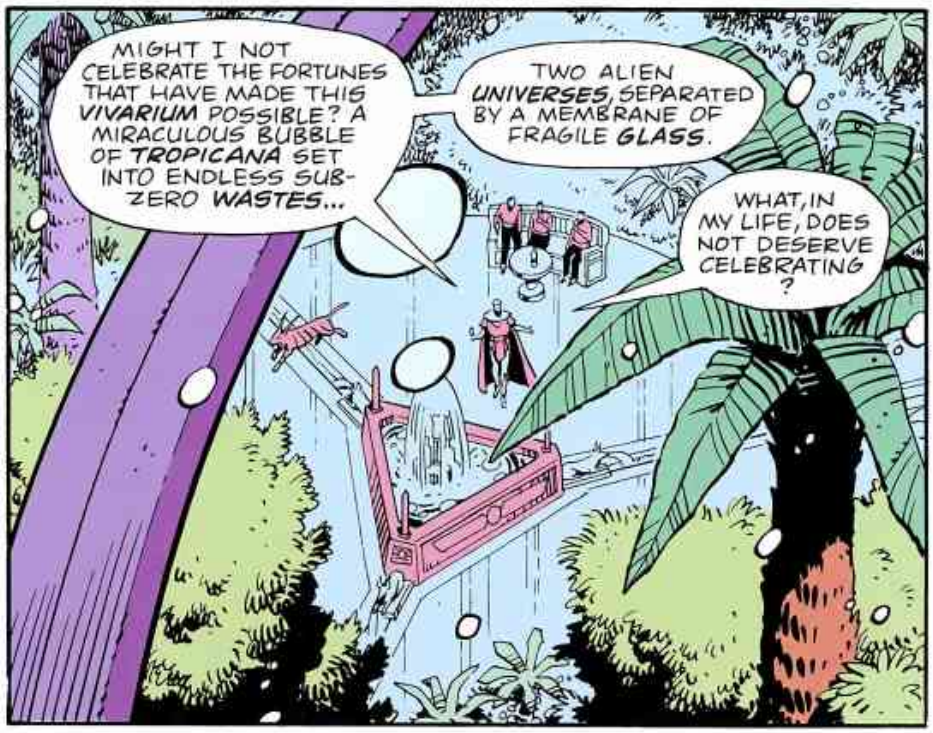
COME ON, OLD GIRL. WE HAVE A FEW MATTERS TO ATTEND TO BEFORE THEY GET HERE.
I SUPPOSE I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR AN OPPORTUNE MOMENT, BUT THERE'S NO POINT PUTTING THINGS OFF ANY LONGER...

TOKYO
LONDON
NEW YORK
...AND NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT.
4


NOT COMING ANY FURTHER? NO?
FAIR ENOUGH. YOU WAIT THERE. THIS WON'T TAKE A MOMENT.
HELLO, MY FRIENDS. I'VE FINISHED MY WORK NOW, AND I'D BE HONORED IF THE THREE OF YOU WOULD JOIN ME FOR A SMALL DRINK IN THE VIVARIUM, BEFORE DINNER.
I HAVE SOMETHING TO CELEBRATE.
VEIDT OUT.
THANK YOU.
5

PARTYIN'! HOLOCAUST COMIN', GODDAMN KNOT-HEADS GOTTA PARTY! I CAN HEAR THAT GOD-FORBID-I-CALL-IT-MUSIC CLEAR FROM MADISON SQUARE!
YANG YANG YANG! MUSIC TO DROP BOMBS BY IS WHAT IT IS...
DAVIDSTOWN SLEPT, DESERTED SAVE FOR SILENCE.
TETHERING BOTH HORSES TO THE VERANDAH, I ENTERED MY FORMER RESIDENCE NOISELESSLY, CAREFUL NOT TO ROUSE THE BUTCHERS OCCUPYING IT FROM THEIR DEBAUCHED SLUMBER.
THEY'LL ALL COME OUT FIGHTIN' DRUNK, COVERED IN TATTOOS AND EARRINGS...
AN' IT'S RIGHT DOWN THE AVENUE! I TELLYA, THIS IS A BAD INTERSECTION. YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT'S GONNA TURN UP NEXT.
UNAWARE THAT DEATH WAS AMONGST THEM, THEY'D KNOW ITS DARK EMBRACE WITHOUT EVER UNDERSTANDING WHY.
ONE, HOWEVER, WAS AWAKE.
FRANTIC LEST HE SHOULD RAISE ALARUMS, I SET UPON HIM AS HE ENTERED THE NIGHT-WRAPPED CHAMBER.
IN FACT, I SEE ONE MORE STUPID HAIRCUT, I'M GONNA ...
OH. HI. GETCHA SOMETHING?
NAH. GUESS JOSEPHINE POSTED THIS, LIKE SHE SAID. Y'KNOW, SOMETIMES SHE REALLY TRIES. SHE FINISHED WORK YET?
JOSEPHI...? OHH... JOEY! YOU MUST BE HER... UH...
GIRLFRIEND. EX. WE'VE BEEN FIGHTING.
IN CATARACT DARKNESS, I BLUDGEONED HIM, HIS SCREAMS UNNERVINGLY SHRILL.
OH. WELL, I AIN'T SEEN HER LATELY...
NO SWEAT. I'LL WAIT OUTSIDE THE PROMETHEAN. I'M NOT RELISHING THE ENCOUNTER.
NO PIRATES CAME, BUT SOMETHING WORSE. I LOOKED UP INTO FACES FAMILIAR SAVE FOR THEIR TERROR.
LISTEN, TELL HER HUSTLER'S DUE IN TOMORROW!
HUSTLER? GOD, IF IT'S OKAY, I'LL LET HER FIND OUT HERSELF.
THE CHILDREN WAILED. I LOOKED DOWN AT THE FIGURE BENEATH ME. THROUGH PUFFED AND BLOODIED LIPS SHE MOUTHED MY NAME.
HUH? WHADDI SAY? DON'T GO AWAY MAD...
THERE CAME AN UNDERSTANDING SO LARGE, IT LEFT NO ROOM FOR SANITY. AS I FLED PAST THE MOUNTED CADAVER OUTSIDE, LANTERNS FLARED IN NEARBY WINDOWS.
HUH! TIMES LIKE THESE, PEOPLE GOTTA BE HOSTILE? ME AN' ROSA SHOULDA QUIT THIS TOWN LIKE SHE WANNED, AN' ESCAPED FROM EVERYTHING.
I RAN, BUT THE KNOWLEDGE OF MY DAMNATION PACED ME, GLOATING, CELEBRATING ITS AWFUL VICTORY.
6


MR. VEIDT. THIS IS INDEED AN HONOR. MIGHT WE ENQUIRE WHAT IT IS THAT PROVIDES OCCASION FOR SUCH GENEROSITY?
A LIFE SUCH AS MINE OFFERS MANY THINGS WORTHY OF CELEBRATION, MY FRIEND. YOU NEED ONLY LOOK ABOUT YOU.


MIGHT I NOT CELEBRATE THE FORTUNES THAT HAVE MADE THIS VIVARIUM POSSIBLE? A MIRACULOUS BUBBLE OF TROPICANA SET INTO ENDLESS SUB-ZERO WASTES...
TWO ALIEN UNIVERSES, SEPARATED BY A MEMBRANE OF FRAGILE GLASS.
WHAT, IN MY LIFE, DOES NOT DESERVE CELEBRATING?

...BUT YOU ARE RIGHT, OF COURSE. TODAY MARKS AN EVENT ESPECIALLY WORTHY OF SUCH ATTENTIONS.
IN MANY WAYS, IT REPRESENTS THE CULMINATION OF A DREAM MORE THAN TWO THOUSAND YEARS OLD.

... ALTHOUGH TO UNCOVER THE REASONS FOR MY CURRENT ELATION, ONE NEED NOT DELVE QUITE SO DEEPLY INTO ANTIQUITY.
A MERE FORTY YEARS WILL SUFFICE, BACK TO MY CHILDHOOD.

"MY PARENTS REACHED AMERICA THE YEAR I WAS BORN, 1939.
"ENTERING SCHOOL, I WAS ALREADY EXCEPTIONALLY BRIGHT, MY PERFECT SCORES ON EARLY TEST PAPERS AROUSING SUCH SUSPICION THAT I CAREFULLY ACHIEVED ONLY AVERAGE GRADES THEREAFTER."

WHAT CAUSED SUCH PRECOCIOUSNESS? MY PARENTS WERE INTELLECTUALLY UNREMARKABLE, POSSESSING NO OBVIOUS GENETIC ADVANTAGES.
PERHAPS I DECIDED TO BE INTELLIGENT, RATHER THAN OTHERWISE? PERHAPS WE ALL MAKE SUCH DECISIONS, THOUGH THAT SEEMS A CALLOUS DOCTRINE.

"BY SEVENTEEN, MY PARENTS WERE BOTH DEAD AND I FACED A DIFFERENT DECISION.
"MY INHERITANCE OFFERED LIFE-LONG IDLE LUXURY, AND YET, NEEDING NOTHING, I BURNED WITH THE PARADOXICAL URGE TO DO EVERYTHING.
"DO YOU UNDERSTAND?"
VEIDT

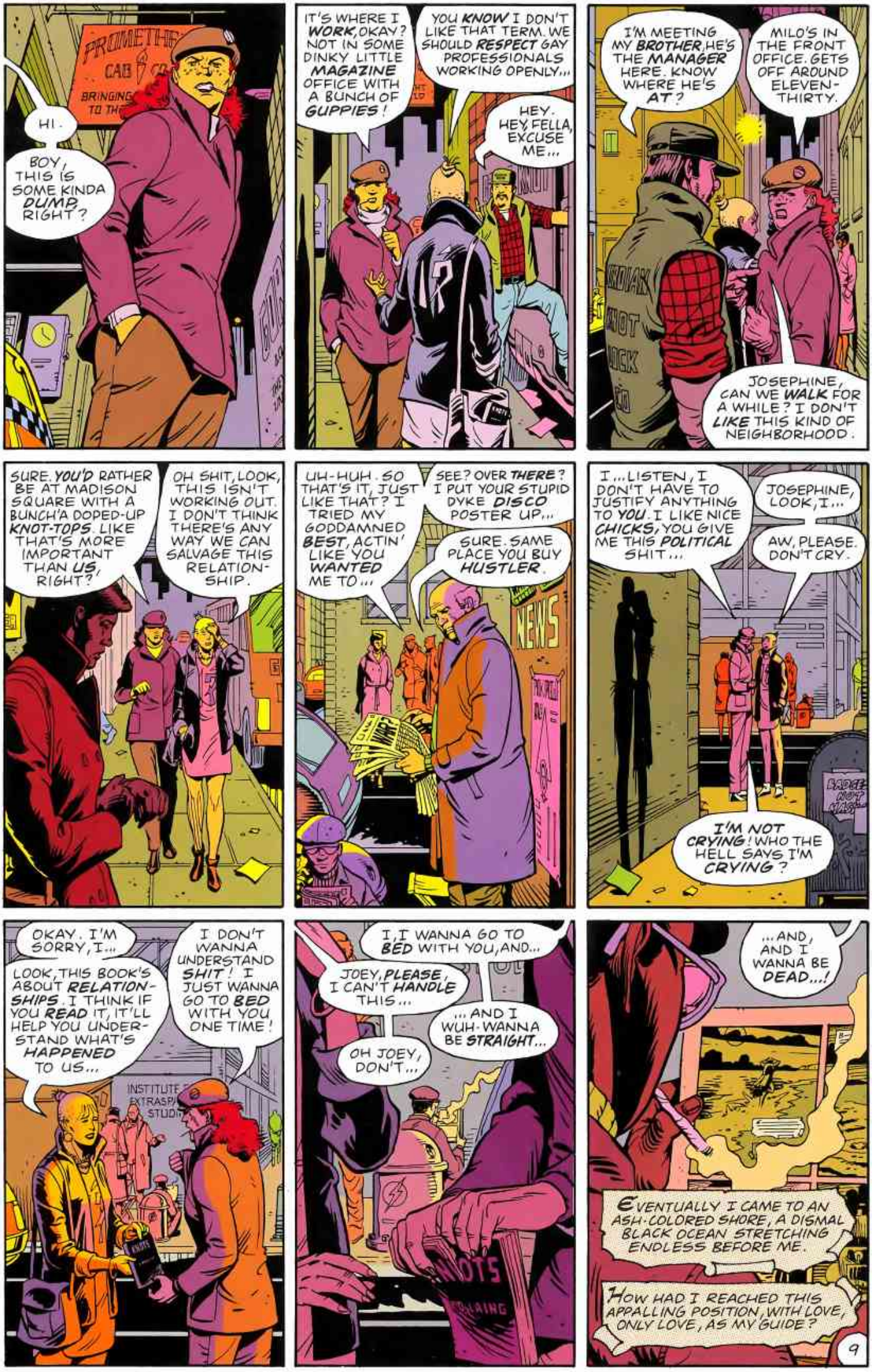
MY INTELLECT SET ME APART. FACED WITH DIFFICULT CHOICES, I KNEW NOBODY WHOSE ADVICE MIGHT PROVE USEFUL. NOBODY LIVING.
THE ONLY HUMAN BEING WITH WHOM I FELT ANY KINSHIP DIED THREE HUNDRED YEARS BEFORE THE BIRTH OF CHRIST.

"ALEXANDER OF MACEDONIA. I IDOLIZED HIM. A YOUNG ARMY COMMANDER, HE'D SWEPT ALONG THE COASTS OF TURKEY AND PHOENICIA, SUBDUING EGYPT BEFORE TURNING HIS ARMIES TOWARDS PERSIA...
"HE DIED, AGED THIRTY-THREE, RULING MOST OF THE CIVILIZED WORLD."

RULING WITHOUT BARBARISM! AT ALEXANDRIA, HE INSTITUTED THE ANCIENT WORLD'S GREATEST SEAT OF LEARNING.
TRUE, PEOPLE DIED... PERHAPS UNNECESSARILY, THOUGH WHO CAN JUDGE SUCH THINGS? YET HOW NEARLY HE APPROACHED HIS VISION OF A UNITED WORLD!

"I WAS DETERMINED TO MEASURE MY SUCCESS AGAINST HIS. FIRSTLY, I GAVE AWAY MY INHERITANCE TO DEMONSTRATE THE POSSIBILITY OF ACHIEVING ANYTHING, STARTING FROM NOTHING.
"NEXT I DEPARTED FOR NORTHERN TURKEY, TO RETRACE MY HERO'S STEPS."

I WANTED TO MATCH HIS ACCOMPLISHMENT, BRINGING AN AGE OF ILLUMINATION TO A BENIGHTED WORLD.
HEH.
I WANTED TO HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY TO HIM, SHOULD WE MEET IN THE HALL OF LEGENDS.


HI.
BOY, THIS IS SOME KINDA DUMB, RIGHT?
IT'S WHERE I WORK, OKAY? NOT IN SOME DINKY LITTLE MAGAZINE OFFICE WITH A BUNCH OF GUPPIES!
YOU KNOW I DON'T LIKE THAT TERM. WE SHOULD RESPECT GAY PROFESSIONALS WORKING OPENLY...
HEY. HEY, FELLA, EXCUSE ME...
I'M MEETING MY BROTHER, HE'S THE MANAGER HERE. KNOW WHERE HE'S AT?
MILO'S IN THE FRONT OFFICE. GETS OFF AROUND ELEVEN-THIRTY.
JOSEPHINE, CAN WE WALK FOR A WHILE? I DON'T LIKE THIS KIND OF NEIGHBORHOOD.
SURE. YOU'D RATHER BE AT MADISON SQUARE WITH A BUNCH'A DOPED-UP KNOT-TOPS. LIKE THAT'S MORE IMPORTANT THAN US, RIGHT?
OH SHIT, LOOK, THIS ISN'T WORKING OUT. I DON'T THINK THERE'S ANY WAY WE CAN SALVAGE THIS RELATION-SHIP.
UH-HUH. SO THAT'S IT, JUST LIKE THAT? I TRIED MY GODDAMNED BEST, ACTIN' LIKE YOU WANTED ME TO...
SEE? OVER THERE? I PUT YOUR STUPID DYKE DISCO POSTER UP...
SURE. SAME PLACE YOU BUY HUSTLER.
NEWS
I...LISTEN, I DON'T HAVE TO JUSTIFY ANYTHING TO YOU. I LIKE NICE CHICKS, YOU GIVE ME THIS POLITICAL SHIT...
JOSEPHINE, LOOK, I...
AW, PLEASE. DON'T CRY.
I'M NOT CRYING! WHO THE HELL SAYS I'M CRYING?
OKAY. I'M SORRY, I...
LOOK, THIS BOOK'S ABOUT RELATION-SHIPS. I THINK IF YOU READ IT, IT'LL HELP YOU UNDER-STAND WHAT'S HAPPENED TO US...
I DON'T WANNA UNDERSTAND SHIT! I JUST WANNA GO TO BED WITH YOU ONE TIME!
I, I WANNA GO TO BED WITH YOU, AND...
JOEY, PLEASE, I CAN'T HANDLE THIS...
... AND I WUH-WANNA BE STRAIGHT...
OH JOEY, DON'T...
...AND, AND I WANNA BE DEAD...!
EVENTUALLY I CAME TO AN ASH-COLORED SHORE, A DISMAL BLACK OCEAN STRETCHING ENDLESS BEFORE ME.
HOW HAD I REACHED THIS APPALLING POSITION, WITH LOVE, ONLY LOVE, AS MY GUIDE?
9

"I FOLLOWED THE PATH OF ALEXANDER'S WAR MACHINE ALONG THE BLACK SEA COAST, IMAGINING HIS ARMIES TAKING PORT AFTER PORT; ANCIENT BLOOD ON ANCIENT BRONZE.

"STRANGELY, BEFORE SUBDUING **PHOENICIA**, HE STRUCK NORTH TOWARDS **GORDIUM**..."

...PERHAPS BECAUSE OF THE **CHALLENGE** IT PRESENTED: THE ANCIENT WORLD'S GREATEST **PUZZLE** WAS THERE, A **KNOT** THAT COULDN'T BE **UNTIED**.

ALEXANDER CUT IT IN TWO WITH HIS SWORD.

LATERAL THINKING, YOU SEE. CENTURIES AHEAD OF HIS TIME.

"HEADING SOUTH, HE ENTERED EGYPT THROUGH **MEMPHIS**, WHERE THEY PROCLAIMED HIM SON OF **AMON**, JUDGE OF THE DEAD, WHOSE NAME MEANS '*THE HIDDEN ONE*'.

"UNDER RULE FROM ALEXANDRIA, THE CLASSIC CULTURE OF THE GREAT PHARAOHS WAS RESTORED."

I FOLLOWED HIM THROUGH **BABYLON**, UP THROUGH **KABUL** TO **SAMARKHAND**, THEN DOWN THE **INDUS**, WHERE HE FIRST MET ELEPHANTS-OF-WAR.

WHERE HE'D TURNED **BACK** TO QUELL DISSENT AT **HOME**, I TRAVELLED **ON**, THROUGH **CHINA** AND **TIBET**, GATHERING MARTIAL WISDOM AS I WENT.

"ALEXANDER RETURNED TO BABYLON TO DIE OF AN **INFECTION**, AGED **THIRTY-THREE**. AMONGST ITS RUINED ZIGGURATS, I SAW AT LAST HIS **FAILINGS**...

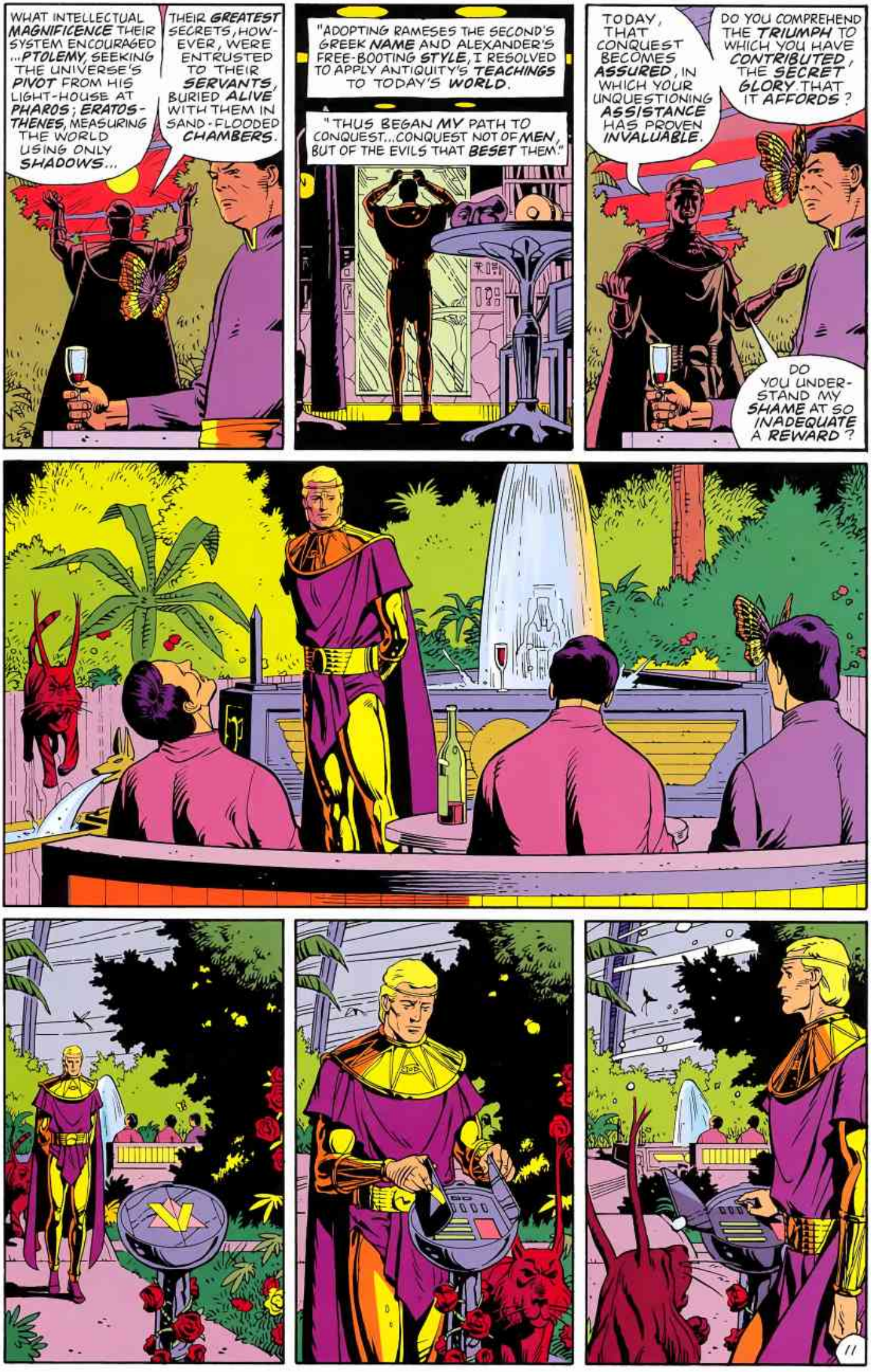
"HE'D NOT UNITED **ALL** THE WORLD, NOR BUILT A UNITY THAT WOULD **SURVIVE** HIM."

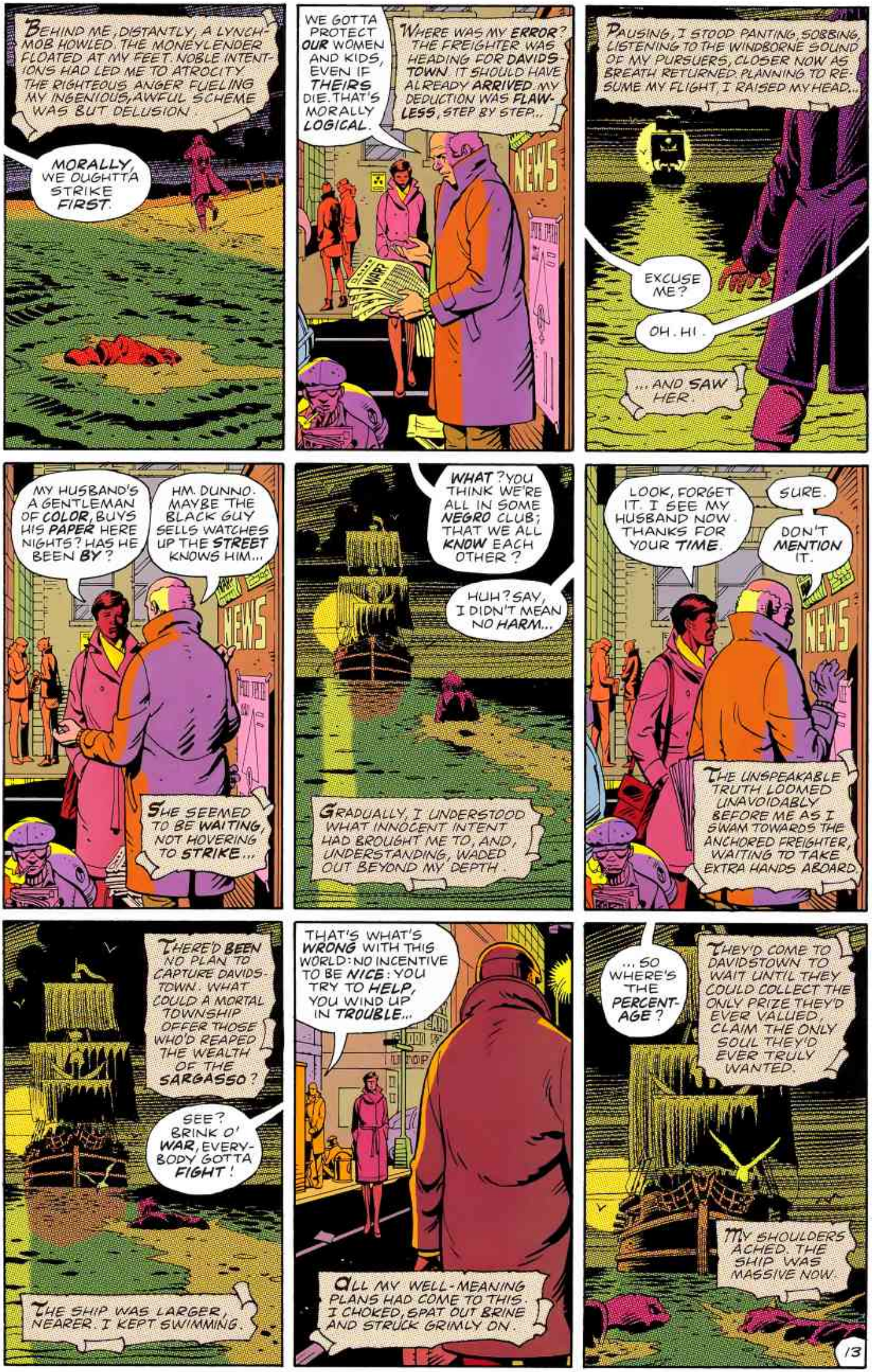
DISILLUSIONED BUT DETERMINED TO COMPLETE MY ODYSSEY, I FOLLOWED HIS CORPSE TO ITS RESTING PLACE IN **ALEXANDRIA**.

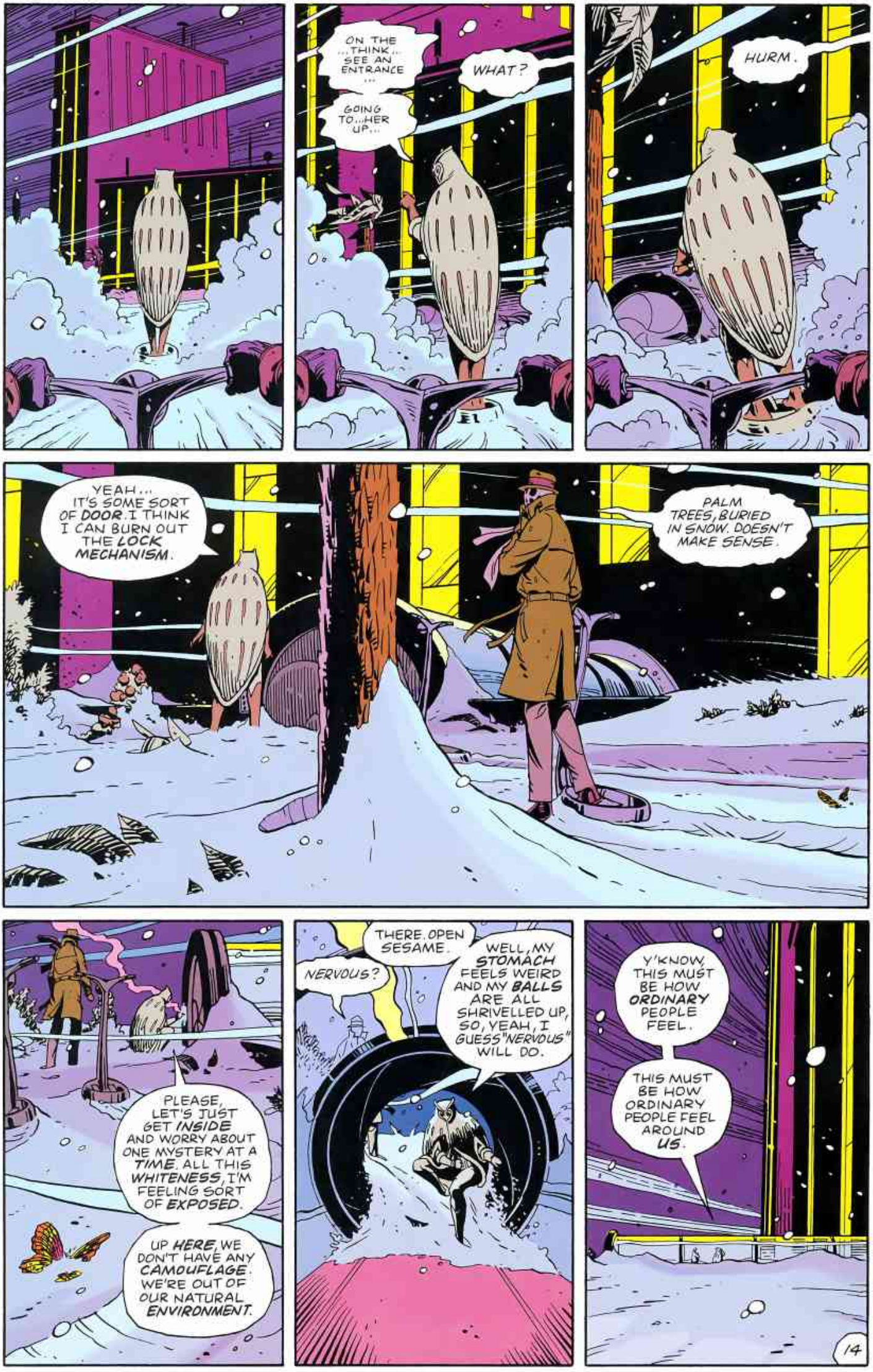
THE NIGHT BEFORE RETURNING TO AMERICA, I WANDERED INTO THE **DESERT** AND ATE A BALL OF **HASHISH** I'D BEEN GIVEN IN **TIBET**.

"THE ENSUING VISION **TRANSFORMED** ME. WADING THROUGH POWDERED **HISTORY**, I HEARD DEAD KINGS WALKING UNDERGROUND; HEARD FANFARES SOUND THROUGH HUMAN SKULLS.

"ALEXANDER HAD MERELY RESURRECTED AN AGE OF **PHARAOHS**. **THEIR** WISDOM, **TRULY** IMMORTAL, NOW INSPIRED **ME**!"


WHAT INTELLECTUAL MAGNIFICENCE THEIR SYSTEM ENCOURAGED ...PTOLEMY, SEEKING THE UNIVERSE'S PIVOT FROM HIS LIGHT-HOUSE AT PHAROS; ERATOSTHENES, MEASURING THE WORLD USING ONLY SHADOWS...
THEIR GREATEST SECRETS, HOWEVER, WERE ENTRUSTED TO THEIR SERVANTS, BURIED ALIVE WITH THEM IN SAND-FLOODED CHAMBERS.
"ADOPTING RAMESES THE SECOND'S GREEK NAME AND ALEXANDER'S FREE-BOOTING STYLE, I RESOLVED TO APPLY ANTIQUITY'S TEACHINGS TO TODAY'S WORLD.
"THUS BEGAN MY PATH TO CONQUEST...CONQUEST NOT OF MEN, BUT OF THE EVILS THAT BESET THEM."
TODAY, THAT CONQUEST BECOMES ASSURED, IN WHICH YOUR UNQUESTIONING ASSISTANCE HAS PROVEN INVALUABLE.
DO YOU COMPREHEND THE TRIUMPH TO WHICH YOU HAVE CONTRIBUTED, THE SECRET GLORY THAT IT AFFORDS?
DO YOU UNDERSTAND MY SHAME AT SO INADEQUATE A REWARD?


BEHIND ME, DISTANTLY, A LYNCH-MOB HOWLED. THE MONEYLENDER FLOATED AT MY FEET. NOBLE INTENTIONS HAD LED ME TO ATROCITY. THE RIGHTEOUS ANGER FUELING MY INGENIOUS, AWFUL SCHEME WAS BUT DELUSION.
MORALLY, WE OUGHTTA STRIKE FIRST.
WE GOTTA PROTECT OUR WOMEN AND KIDS, EVEN IF THEIRS DIE. THAT'S MORALLY LOGICAL.
WHERE WAS MY ERROR? THE FREIGHTER WAS HEADING FOR DAVIDSTOWN. IT SHOULD HAVE ALREADY ARRIVED. MY DEDUCTION WAS FLAWLESS, STEP BY STEP...
NEWS
WARP
PAUSING, I STOOD PANTING, SOBBING, LISTENING TO THE WINDBORNE SOUND OF MY PURSUERS, CLOSER NOW AS BREATH RETURNED. PLANNING TO RESUME MY FLIGHT, I RAISED MY HEAD...
EXCUSE ME?
OH. HI.
... AND SAW HER.
MY HUSBAND'S A GENTLEMAN OF COLOR, BUYS HIS PAPER HERE NIGHTS? HAS HE BEEN BY?
HM. DUNNO. MAYBE THE BLACK GUY SELLS WATCHES UP THE STREET KNOWS HIM...
NEWS
SHE SEEMED TO BE WAITING, NOT HOVERING TO STRIKE...
WHAT? YOU THINK WE'RE ALL IN SOME NEGRO CLUB; THAT WE ALL KNOW EACH OTHER?
HUH? SAY, I DIDN'T MEAN NO HARM...
GRADUALLY, I UNDERSTOOD WHAT INNOCENT INTENT HAD BROUGHT ME TO, AND, UNDERSTANDING, WADED OUT BEYOND MY DEPTH.
LOOK, FORGET IT. I SEE MY HUSBAND NOW. THANKS FOR YOUR TIME.
SURE.
DON'T MENTION IT.
NEWS
THE UNSPEAKABLE TRUTH LOOMED UNAVOIDABLY BEFORE ME AS I SWAM TOWARDS THE ANCHORED FREIGHTER, WAITING TO TAKE EXTRA HANDS ABOARD.
THERE'D BEEN NO PLAN TO CAPTURE DAVIDSTOWN. WHAT COULD A MORTAL TOWNSHIP OFFER THOSE WHO'D REAPED THE WEALTH OF THE SARGASSO?
SEE? BRINK O' WAR, EVERYBODY GOTTA FIGHT!
THE SHIP WAS LARGER, NEARER. I KEPT SWIMMING.
THAT'S WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS WORLD: NO INCENTIVE TO BE NICE: YOU TRY TO HELP, YOU WIND UP IN TROUBLE...
ALL MY WELL-MEANING PLANS HAD COME TO THIS. I CHOKED, SPAT OUT BRINE AND STRUCK GRIMLY ON.
... SO WHERE'S THE PERCENTAGE?
THEY'D COME TO DAVIDSTOWN TO WAIT UNTIL THEY COULD COLLECT THE ONLY PRIZE THEY'D EVER VALUED, CLAIM THE ONLY SOUL THEY'D EVER TRULY WANTED.
MY SHOULDERS ACHED. THE SHIP WAS MASSIVE NOW.
13


ON THE ...THINK... SEE AN ENTRANCE ...
GOING TO...HER UP...
WHAT?
HURM.
YEAH... IT'S SOME SORT OF DOOR. I THINK I CAN BURN OUT THE LOCK MECHANISM.
PALM TREES, BURIED IN SNOW. DOESN'T MAKE SENSE.
PLEASE, LET'S JUST GET INSIDE AND WORRY ABOUT ONE MYSTERY AT A TIME. ALL THIS WHITENESS, I'M FEELING SORT OF EXPOSED.
UP HERE, WE DON'T HAVE ANY CAMOUFLAGE. WE'RE OUT OF OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT.
NERVOUS?
THERE. OPEN SESAME.
WELL, MY STOMACH FEELS WEIRD AND MY BALLS ARE ALL SHRIVELLED UP, SO, YEAH, I GUESS "NERVOUS" WILL DO.
Y'KNOW, THIS MUST BE HOW ORDINARY PEOPLE FEEL.
THIS MUST BE HOW ORDINARY PEOPLE FEEL AROUND US.
14

JESUS, LOOK AT THIS PLACE. I THOUGHT I HAD SOME STUFF IN THE OWL'S NEST...
I MEAN, WHAT THE HELL IS THAT THING? HALF THIS EQUIPMENT I DON'T EVEN RECOGNIZE...
CAN ASK VEIDT, WHEN WE FIND HIM.
HM. ACTUALLY, THAT'S A POINT. HOW DO WE APPROACH HIM? WHAT DO WE SAY?
NOTHING.
SUBDUE HIM FIRST, IF POSSIBLE. MAY NOT GET SECOND CHANCE. ASK QUESTIONS LATER.
YEAH. I SUPPOSE YOU'RE RIGHT, BUT IT'S GOING TO FEEL AWFULLY STRANGE. HE'S SUCH A CARING, CONSCIENTIOUS GUY. HE'S A PACIFIST, A VEGETARIAN ...
HITLER WAS VEGETARIAN. IF BOTHERS YOU, LEAVE VEIDT TO ME.
SUGGEST WE PROCEED QUIETLY FROM HERE.
LONDON
NEW
15

MANNERS.

ADRIAN...
...DON'T...
...MAKE...
...ME...
KGGUH
NOW...
WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?

DAMMIT, YOU KNOW WHAT THIS IS ABOUT! PYRAMID DELIVERIES ARE BEHIND THIS WHOLE MESS, AND YOU'RE BEHIND PYRAMID.
YOU KNOW!
CHRIST, ADRIAN. WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO DO?

WHAT WE ALL TRIED TO DO, AFTER OUR INITIAL STRUGGLE TO FIND OUR FEET. I'M TRYING TO IMPROVE THE WORLD.
LIKE WHEN I STARTED OUT.

"MY FIRST CASE MADE IT SEEM POSSIBLE TO END INJUSTICE BY DEMOLISHING CRIME SYNDICATES.
"THIS NOTION, THAT CRIMINALS MONOPOLIZED EVIL WAS ITSELF DEMOLISHED BY MY SECOND CASE."

RESEARCHING MY MASKED PREDECESSORS I INVESTIGATED THE MID-FIFTIES DISAPPEARANCE OF HOODED JUSTICE.
AN OPERATIVE, GOVERNMENT SOURCES REVEALED, HAD TRIED UNEARTHING HIM BACK THEN, REPORTING FAILURE...

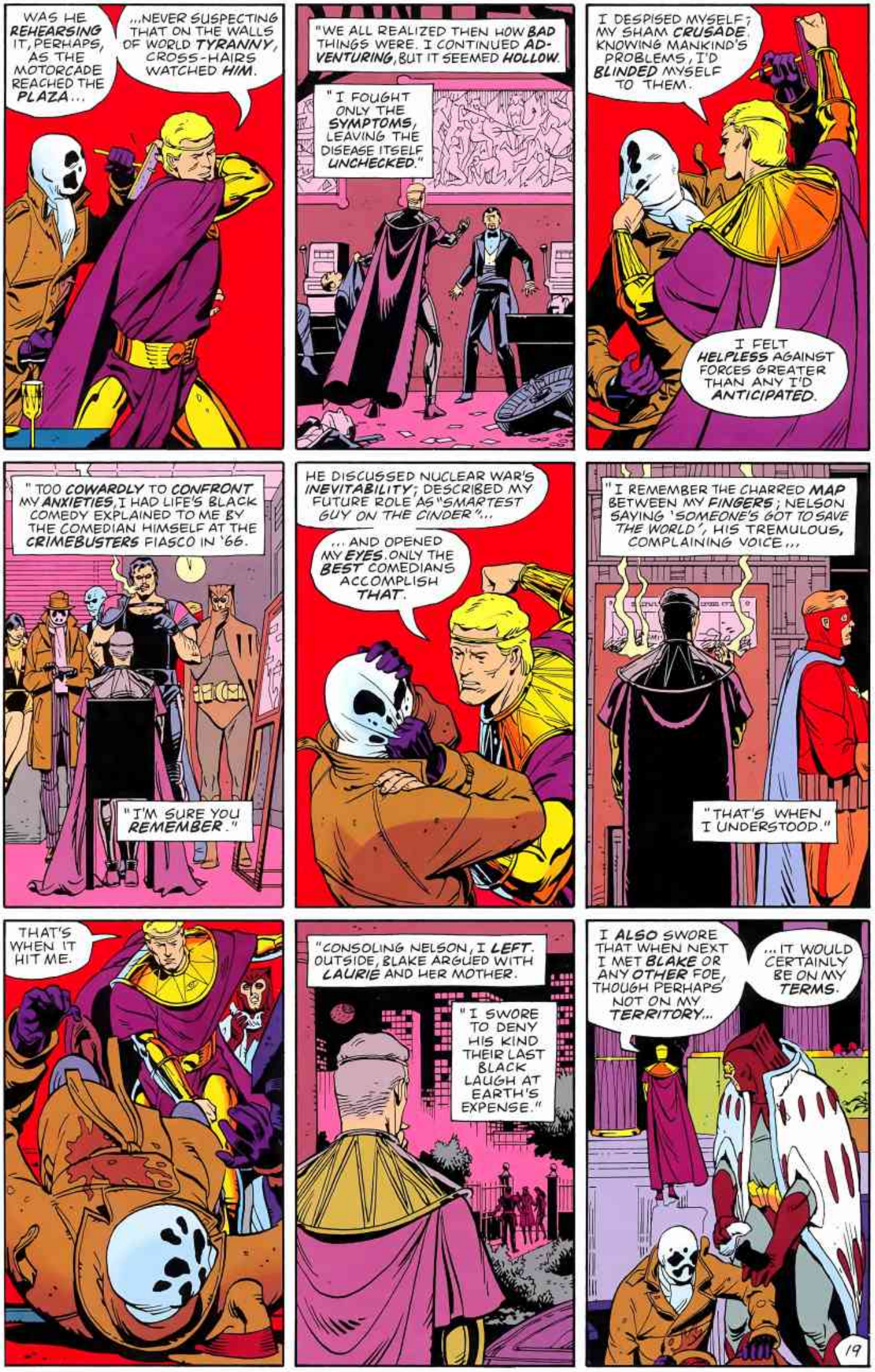
"UNEARTHING THE OPERATIVE, TRACKING HIM TO DOCKLAND, PROVED EASIER.
"EDWARD BLAKE.
"AS INTELLIGENT MEN FACING LUNATIC TIMES, WE WERE VERY ALIKE, DESPISING EACH OTHER INSTANTLY."

RECOGNIZING ME, HE ATTACKED ANYWAY, "MISTAKING ME FOR A CRIMINAL."
I STUDIED HIS LIMITATIONS: SKILLFUL FEINT; DEVASTATING UPPERCUT; LITTLE ELSE...
HE WON. IN THE SHORT TERM.

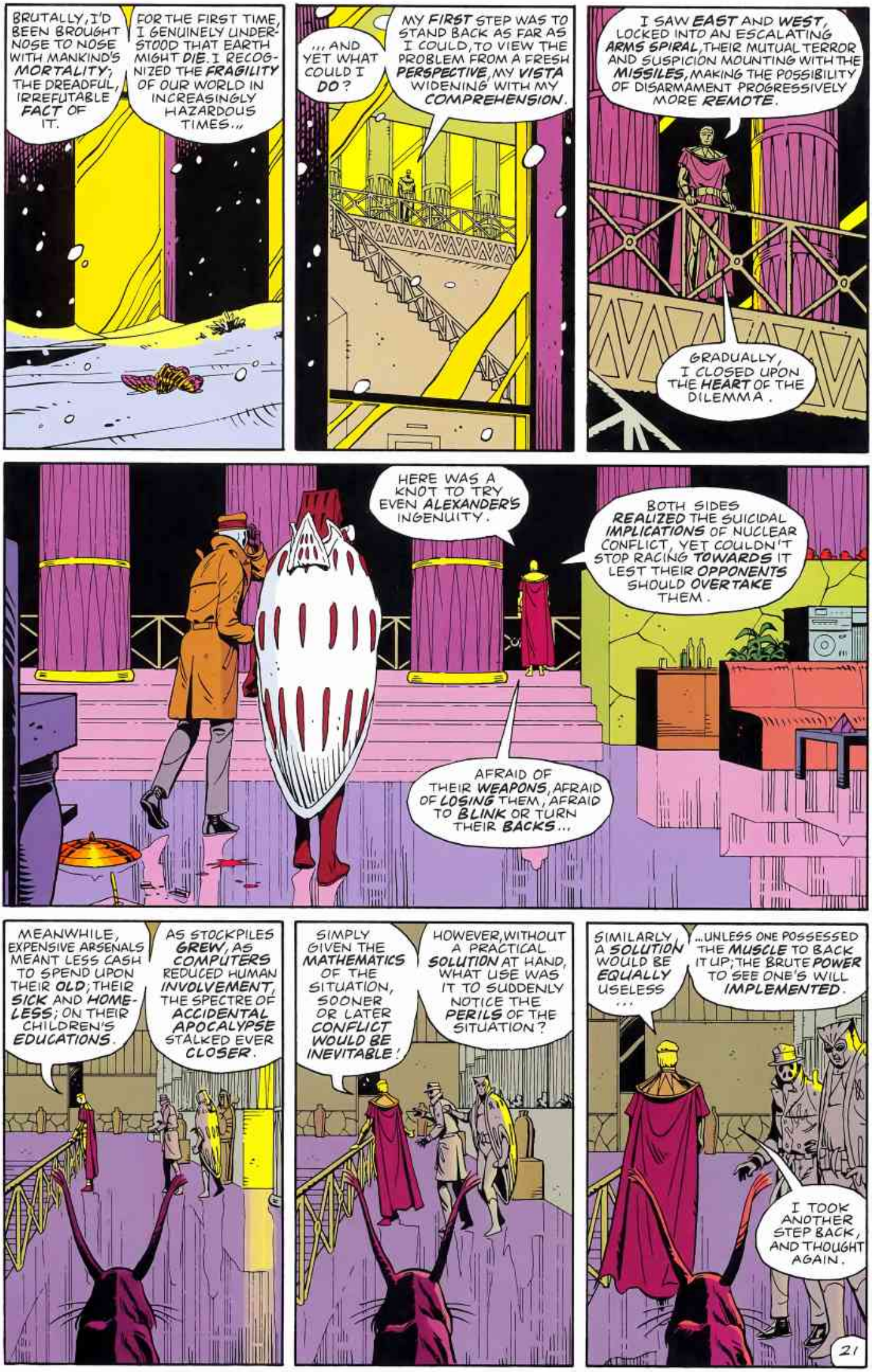
"HAD BLAKE FOUND HOODED JUSTICE, KILLED HIM, REPORTING FAILURE? I CAN PROVE NOTHING.
"WE NEXT MET IN 1960. I AVOIDED HIM, MORE FASCINATED BY JON."

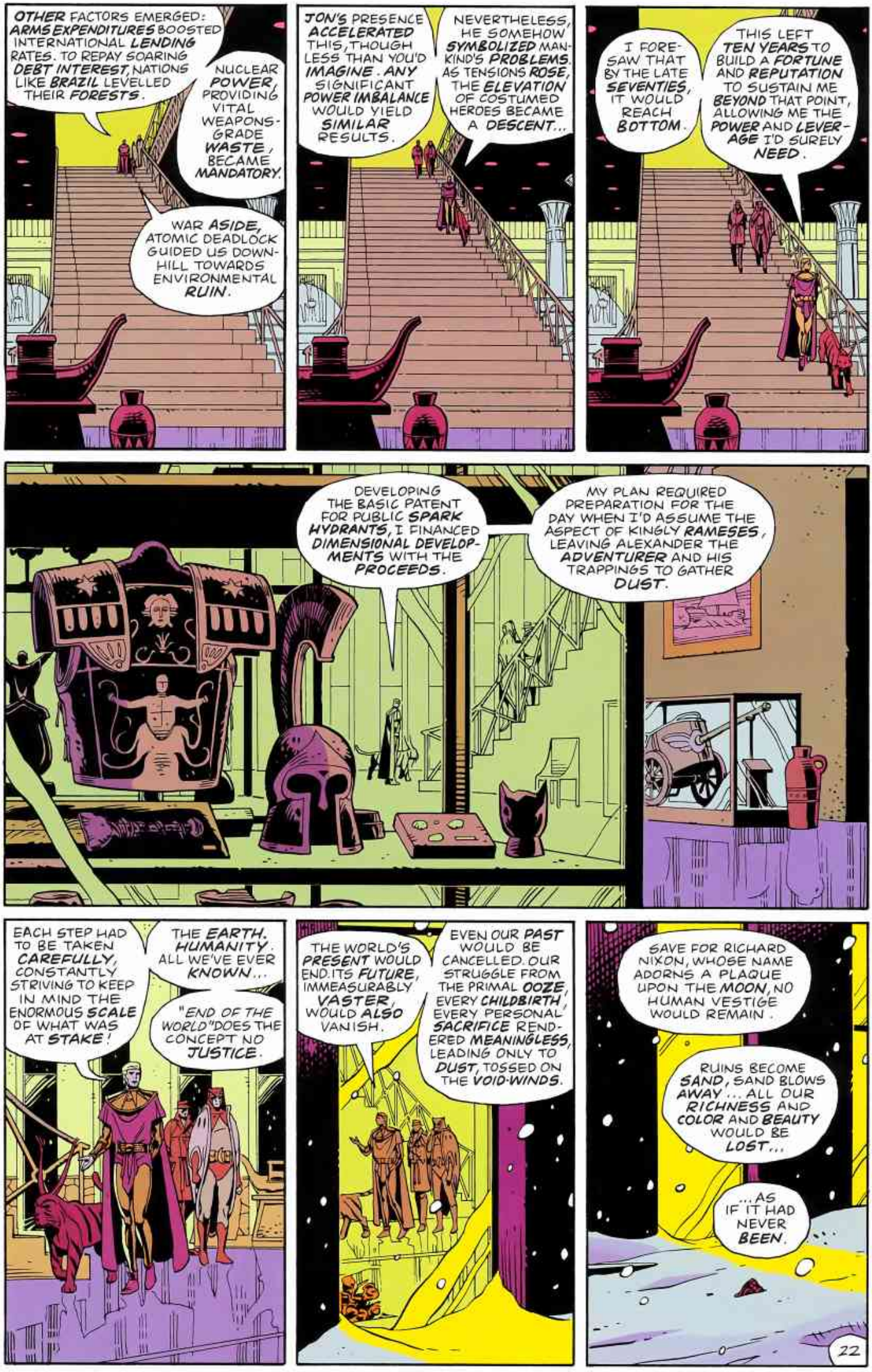
STILL, I OBSERVED BLAKE OVER THE YEARS...
KNOW WHAT? HE WAS IN DALLAS, MINDING NIXON, THE DAY KENNEDY DIED.
NOBODY'S SURE WHY NIXON WAS THERE.

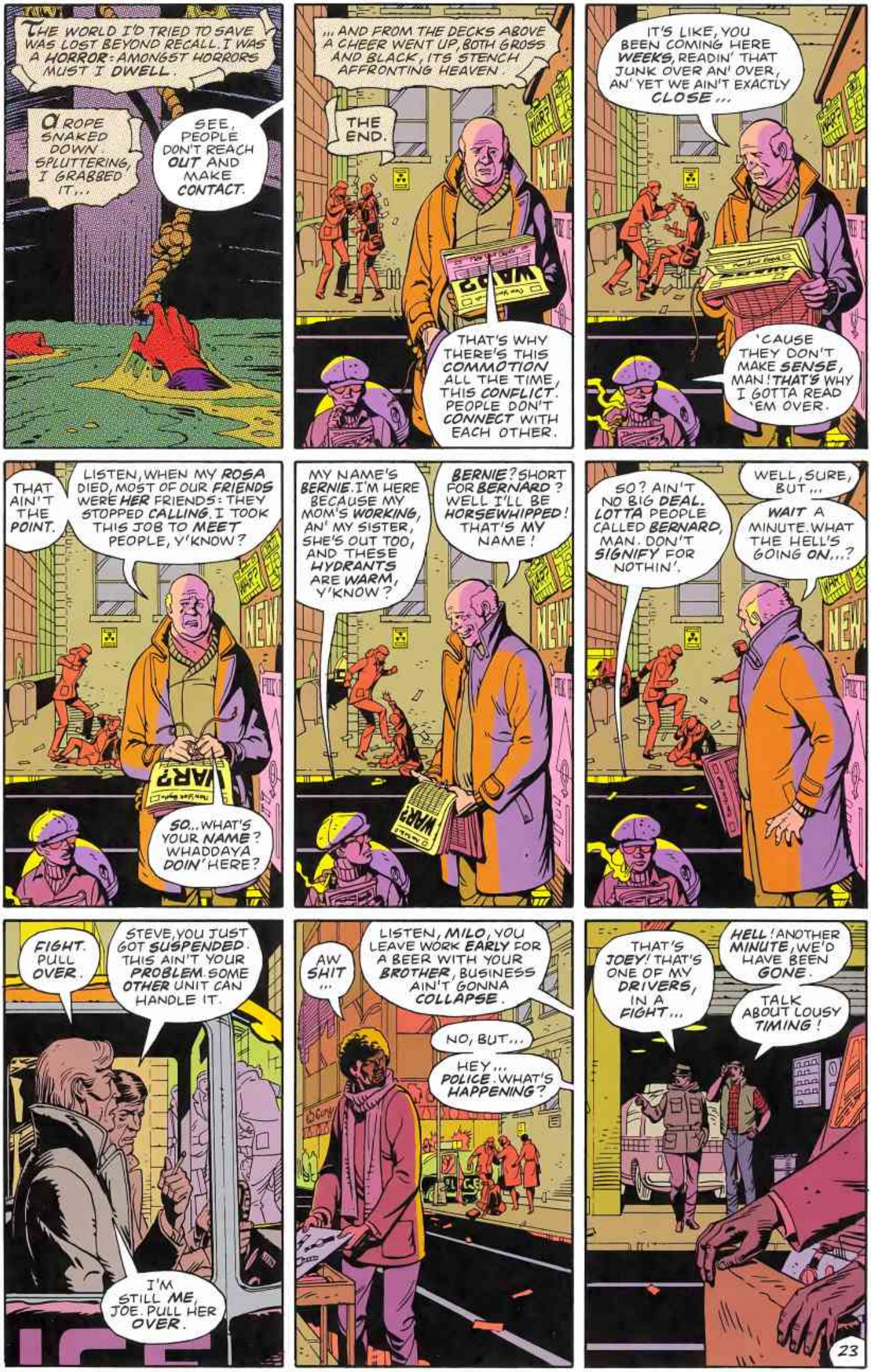
"EVER READ J.F.K.'S INTENDED SPEECH?
"'WE IN THIS COUNTRY, IN THIS GENERATION, ARE BY DESTINY, RATHER THAN CHOICE, THE WATCHMEN ON THE WALLS OF WORLD FREEDOM.'"

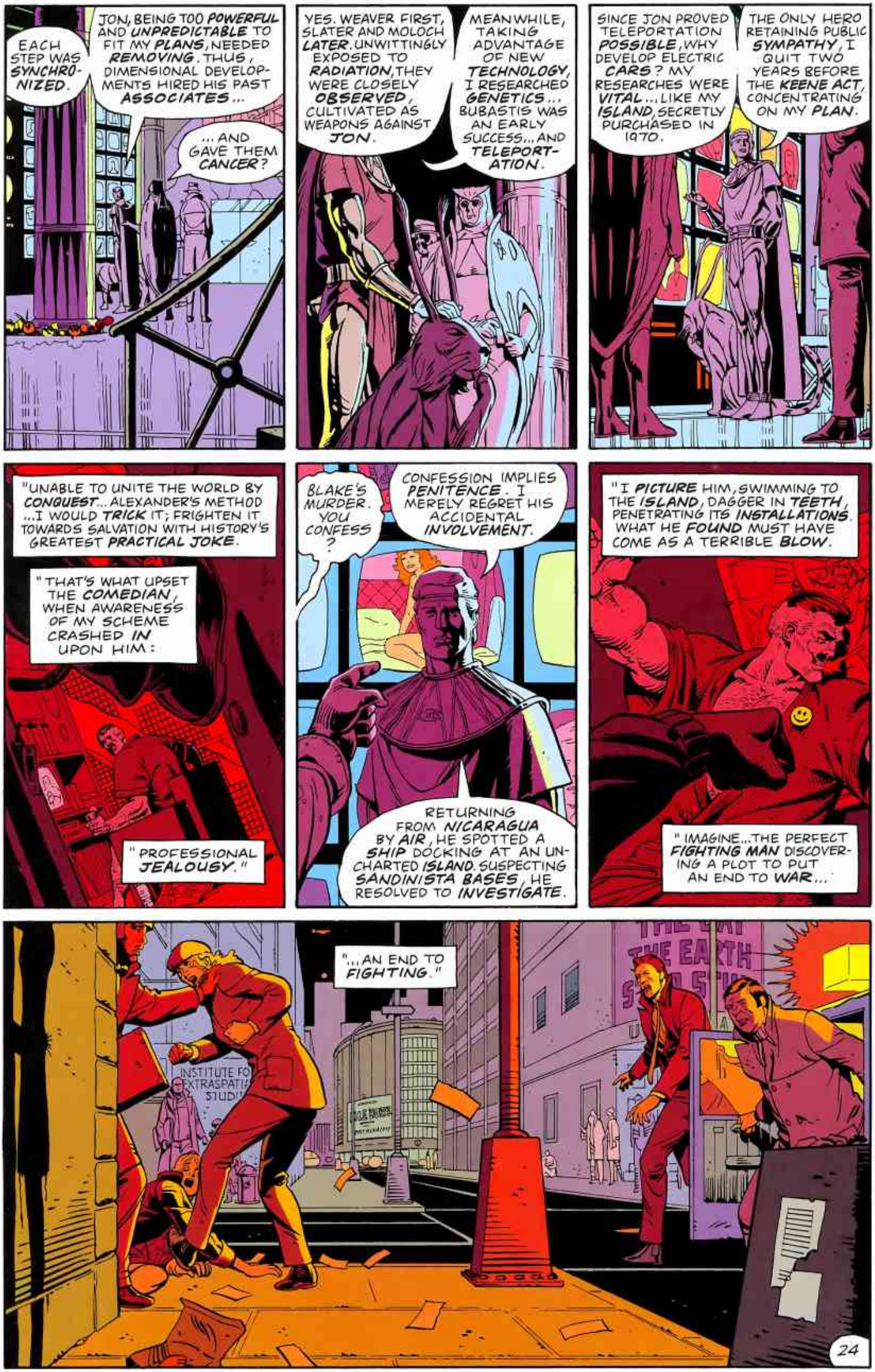

WAS HE REHEARSING IT, PERHAPS, AS THE MOTORCADE REACHED THE PLAZA...
...NEVER SUSPECTING THAT ON THE WALLS OF WORLD TYRANNY, CROSS-HAIRS WATCHED HIM.
"WE ALL REALIZED THEN HOW BAD THINGS WERE. I CONTINUED ADVENTURING, BUT IT SEEMED HOLLOW.
"I FOUGHT ONLY THE SYMPTOMS, LEAVING THE DISEASE ITSELF UNCHECKED."
I DESPISED MYSELF; MY SHAM CRUSADE, KNOWING MANKIND'S PROBLEMS, I'D BLINDED MYSELF TO THEM.
I FELT HELPLESS AGAINST FORCES GREATER THAN ANY I'D ANTICIPATED.
"TOO COWARDLY TO CONFRONT MY ANXIETIES, I HAD LIFE'S BLACK COMEDY EXPLAINED TO ME BY THE COMEDIAN HIMSELF AT THE CRIMEBUSTERS FIASCO IN '66.
"I'M SURE YOU REMEMBER."
HE DISCUSSED NUCLEAR WAR'S INEVITABILITY; DESCRIBED MY FUTURE ROLE AS "SMARTEST GUY ON THE CINDER"...
... AND OPENED MY EYES. ONLY THE BEST COMEDIANS ACCOMPLISH THAT.
"I REMEMBER THE CHARRED MAP BETWEEN MY FINGERS; NELSON SAYING 'SOMEONE'S GOT TO SAVE THE WORLD', HIS TREMULOUS, COMPLAINING VOICE...
"THAT'S WHEN I UNDERSTOOD."
THAT'S WHEN IT HIT ME.
"CONSOLING NELSON, I LEFT. OUTSIDE, BLAKE ARGUED WITH LAURIE AND HER MOTHER.
"I SWORE TO DENY HIS KIND THEIR LAST BLACK LAUGH AT EARTH'S EXPENSE."
I ALSO SWORE THAT WHEN NEXT I MET BLAKE OR ANY OTHER FOE, THOUGH PERHAPS NOT ON MY TERRITORY...
...IT WOULD CERTAINLY BE ON MY TERMS.
19

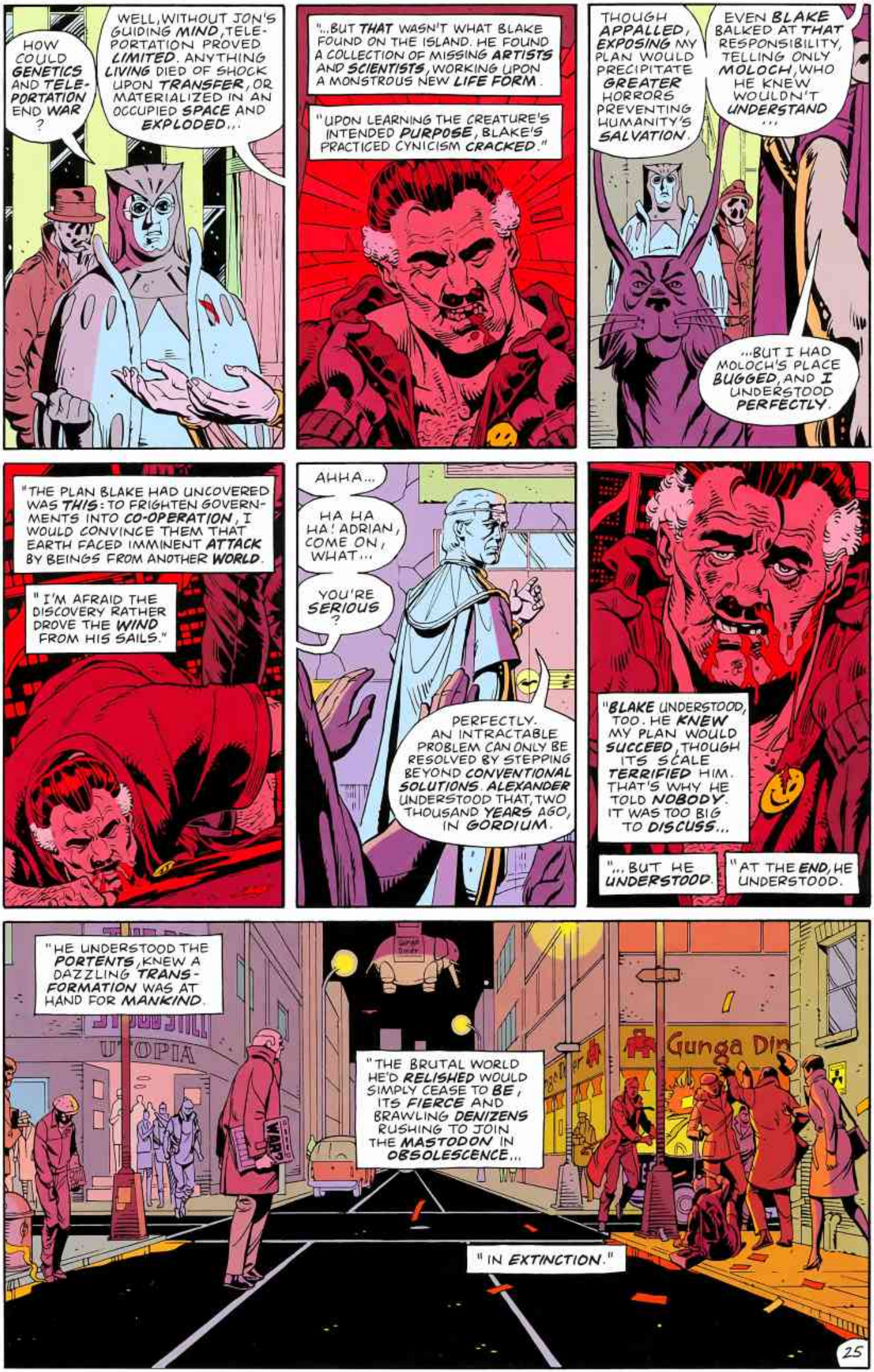
HI.
FANCY MEETING YOU HERE.
GLORIA?
WAR?
I KNEW YOU CAME THIS WAY HOME, SO I FIGURED I'D MEET YOU FROM WORK. I'M NOT READY TO VISIT BACK AT THE APARTMENT JUST YET.
"JUST YET"?
WELL, I WANT TO COME BACK. I MISS YOU, MALCOLM. I MISS THE PERSON YOU WERE...
... BUT I CAN'T LIVE WITH SOMEONE WHO FEELS DRIVEN TO HELP HOPELESS CASES, THEN LETS THEIR MISERY AFFECT OUR LIVES.
IF YOU CAN PROMISE ME YOU'LL ASK FOR A TRANSFER TO DIFFERENT WORK WITH DIFFERENT PATIENTS, I CAN COME HOME... IF THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT.
GLORIA, OF COURSE THAT'S WHAT I WANT, BUT, UH...
WELL, DO IT! I'M NOT GOING TO SHARE YOU WITH A WORLD FULL OF SCREW-UPS AND MANIC DEPRESSIVES. I'M NOT GOING TO SHARE MY LIFE WITH THEM.
MALCOLM?
MALCOLM, ARE YOU LISTENING TO ME?
GLORIA, I'M SORRY ... THOSE PEOPLE... THEY'RE HURTING EACH OTHER...
MALCOLM? DON'T YOU DARE! DON'T YOU DARE GET INVOLVED!
DIDN'T YOU LISTEN TO A WORD I JUST SAID?
GLORIA, PLEASE. I HAVE TO. IN A WORLD LIKE THIS...
I MEAN, IT'S ALL WE CAN DO, TRY TO HELP EACH OTHER. IT'S ALL THAT MEANS ANYTHING...
PLEASE. PLEASE UNDERSTAND.
MALCOLM, I'M WARNING YOU! YOU LET YOURSELF GET DRAWN TOWARDS ANOTHER HEAP OF SOMEBODY ELSE'S GRIEF, I DON'T WANT TO SEE YOU AGAIN!
GLORIA ... I'M SORRY. IT'S THE WORLD ...
I CAN'T RUN FROM IT.
IT'S DARK AND LURCHING MASS FILLED ALL MY VISION. I SAW THE HEADS NAILED TO ITS PROW, HEARD DRUNKEN LAUGHTER; ENCOURAGEMENTS BARKED FROM THE DECKS ABOVE...
CLOSER, IT CAME.
CLOSER.
20

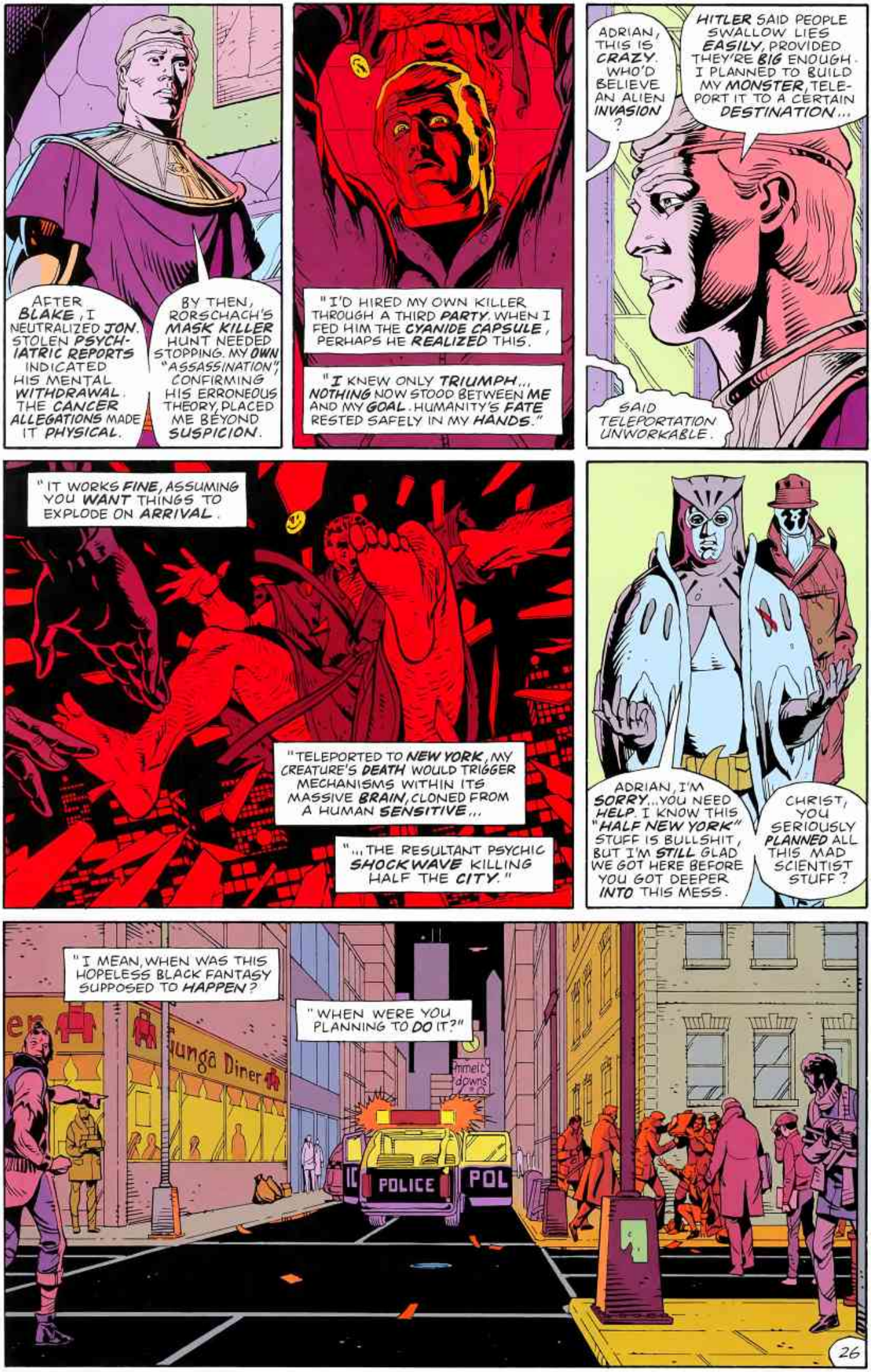

BRUTALLY, I'D BEEN BROUGHT NOSE TO NOSE WITH MANKIND'S MORTALITY; THE DREADFUL, IRREFUTABLE FACT OF IT.
FOR THE FIRST TIME, I GENUINELY UNDERSTOOD THAT EARTH MIGHT DIE. I RECOGNIZED THE FRAGILITY OF OUR WORLD IN INCREASINGLY HAZARDOUS TIMES...
...AND YET WHAT COULD I DO?
MY FIRST STEP WAS TO STAND BACK AS FAR AS I COULD, TO VIEW THE PROBLEM FROM A FRESH PERSPECTIVE, MY VISTA WIDENING WITH MY COMPREHENSION.
I SAW EAST AND WEST, LOCKED INTO AN ESCALATING ARMS SPIRAL, THEIR MUTUAL TERROR AND SUSPICION MOUNTING WITH THE MISSILES, MAKING THE POSSIBILITY OF DISARMAMENT PROGRESSIVELY MORE REMOTE.
GRADUALLY, I CLOSED UPON THE HEART OF THE DILEMMA.
HERE WAS A KNOT TO TRY EVEN ALEXANDER'S INGENUITY.
BOTH SIDES REALIZED THE SUICIDAL IMPLICATIONS OF NUCLEAR CONFLICT, YET COULDN'T STOP RACING TOWARDS IT LEST THEIR OPPONENTS SHOULD OVERTAKE THEM.
AFRAID OF THEIR WEAPONS, AFRAID OF LOSING THEM, AFRAID TO BLINK OR TURN THEIR BACKS...
MEANWHILE, EXPENSIVE ARSENALS MEANT LESS CASH TO SPEND UPON THEIR OLD; THEIR SICK AND HOMELESS; ON THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATIONS.
AS STOCKPILES GREW, AS COMPUTERS REDUCED HUMAN INVOLVEMENT, THE SPECTRE OF ACCIDENTAL APOCALYPSE STALKED EVER CLOSER.
SIMPLY GIVEN THE MATHEMATICS OF THE SITUATION, SOONER OR LATER CONFLICT WOULD BE INEVITABLE!
HOWEVER, WITHOUT A PRACTICAL SOLUTION AT HAND, WHAT USE WAS IT TO SUDDENLY NOTICE THE PERILS OF THE SITUATION?
SIMILARLY A SOLUTION WOULD BE EQUALLY USELESS...
...UNLESS ONE POSSESSED THE MUSCLE TO BACK IT UP; THE BRUTE POWER TO SEE ONE'S WILL IMPLEMENTED.
I TOOK ANOTHER STEP BACK, AND THOUGHT AGAIN.
21


OTHER FACTORS EMERGED: ARMS EXPENDITURES BOOSTED INTERNATIONAL LENDING RATES. TO REPAY SOARING DEBT INTEREST, NATIONS LIKE BRAZIL LEVELLED THEIR FORESTS.
NUCLEAR POWER, PROVIDING VITAL WEAPONS-GRADE WASTE, BECAME MANDATORY.
WAR ASIDE, ATOMIC DEADLOCK GUIDED US DOWN-HILL TOWARDS ENVIRONMENTAL RUIN.
JON'S PRESENCE ACCELERATED THIS, THOUGH LESS THAN YOU'D IMAGINE. ANY SIGNIFICANT POWER IMBALANCE WOULD YIELD SIMILAR RESULTS.
NEVERTHELESS, HE SOMEHOW SYMBOLIZED MANKIND'S PROBLEMS. AS TENSIONS ROSE, THE ELEVATION OF COSTUMED HEROES BECAME A DESCENT...
I FORE-SAW THAT BY THE LATE SEVENTIES, IT WOULD REACH BOTTOM.
THIS LEFT TEN YEARS TO BUILD A FORTUNE AND REPUTATION TO SUSTAIN ME BEYOND THAT POINT, ALLOWING ME THE POWER AND LEVER-AGE I'D SURELY NEED.
DEVELOPING THE BASIC PATENT FOR PUBLIC SPARK HYDRANTS, I FINANCED DIMENSIONAL DEVELOP-MENTS WITH THE PROCEEDS.
MY PLAN REQUIRED PREPARATION FOR THE DAY WHEN I'D ASSUME THE ASPECT OF KINGLY RAMESES, LEAVING ALEXANDER THE ADVENTURER AND HIS TRAPPINGS TO GATHER DUST.
EACH STEP HAD TO BE TAKEN CAREFULLY, CONSTANTLY STRIVING TO KEEP IN MIND THE ENORMOUS SCALE OF WHAT WAS AT STAKE!
THE EARTH. HUMANITY. ALL WE'VE EVER KNOWN...
"END OF THE WORLD" DOES THE CONCEPT NO JUSTICE.
THE WORLD'S PRESENT WOULD END. ITS FUTURE, IMMEASURABLY VASTER, WOULD ALSO VANISH.
EVEN OUR PAST WOULD BE CANCELLED. OUR STRUGGLE FROM THE PRIMAL OOZE, EVERY CHILDBIRTH, EVERY PERSONAL SACRIFICE RENDERED MEANINGLESS, LEADING ONLY TO DUST, TOSSED ON THE VOID-WINDS.
SAVE FOR RICHARD NIXON, WHOSE NAME ADORNS A PLAQUE UPON THE MOON, NO HUMAN VESTIGE WOULD REMAIN.
RUINS BECOME SAND, SAND BLOWS AWAY... ALL OUR RICHNESS AND COLOR AND BEAUTY WOULD BE LOST...
...AS IF IT HAD NEVER BEEN.
22


THE WORLD I'D TRIED TO SAVE WAS LOST BEYOND RECALL. I WAS A HORROR: AMONGST HORRORS MUST I DWELL.
A ROPE SNAKED DOWN. SPLUTTERING, I GRABBED IT...
SEE, PEOPLE DON'T REACH OUT AND MAKE CONTACT.
... AND FROM THE DECKS ABOVE A CHEER WENT UP, BOTH GROSS AND BLACK, ITS STENCH AFFRONTING HEAVEN.
THE END.
THAT'S WHY THERE'S THIS COMMOTION ALL THE TIME, THIS CONFLICT. PEOPLE DON'T CONNECT WITH EACH OTHER.
IT'S LIKE, YOU BEEN COMING HERE WEEKS, READIN' THAT JUNK OVER AN' OVER, AN' YET WE AIN'T EXACTLY CLOSE...
'CAUSE THEY DON'T MAKE SENSE, MAN! THAT'S WHY I GOTTA READ 'EM OVER.
THAT AIN'T THE POINT.
LISTEN, WHEN MY ROSA DIED, MOST OF OUR FRIENDS WERE HER FRIENDS: THEY STOPPED CALLING. I TOOK THIS JOB TO MEET PEOPLE, Y'KNOW?
SO.. WHAT'S YOUR NAME? WHADDAYA DOIN' HERE?
MY NAME'S BERNIE. I'M HERE BECAUSE MY MOM'S WORKING, AN' MY SISTER, SHE'S OUT TOO, AND THESE HYDRANTS ARE WARM, Y'KNOW?
BERNIE? SHORT FOR BERNARD? WELL I'LL BE HORSEWHIPPED! THAT'S MY NAME!
SO? AIN'T NO BIG DEAL. LOTTA PEOPLE CALLED BERNARD, MAN. DON'T SIGNIFY FOR NOTHIN'.
WELL, SURE, BUT...
WAIT A MINUTE. WHAT THE HELL'S GOING ON...?
FIGHT. PULL OVER.
STEVE, YOU JUST GOT SUSPENDED. THIS AIN'T YOUR PROBLEM. SOME OTHER UNIT CAN HANDLE IT.
I'M STILL ME, JOE. PULL HER OVER.
AW SHIT ...
LISTEN, MILO, YOU LEAVE WORK EARLY FOR A BEER WITH YOUR BROTHER, BUSINESS AIN'T GONNA COLLAPSE.
NO, BUT...
HEY... POLICE. WHAT'S HAPPENING?
THAT'S JOEY! THAT'S ONE OF MY DRIVERS, IN A FIGHT...
HELL! ANOTHER MINUTE, WE'D HAVE BEEN GONE.
TALK ABOUT LOUSY TIMING!
23


EACH STEP WAS SYNCHRONIZED.
JON, BEING TOO POWERFUL AND UNPREDICTABLE TO FIT MY PLANS, NEEDED REMOVING. THUS, DIMENSIONAL DEVELOPMENTS HIRED HIS PAST ASSOCIATES...
...AND GAVE THEM CANCER?
YES. WEAVER FIRST, SLATER AND MOLOCH LATER. UNWITTINGLY EXPOSED TO RADIATION, THEY WERE CLOSELY OBSERVED, CULTIVATED AS WEAPONS AGAINST JON.
MEANWHILE, TAKING ADVANTAGE OF NEW TECHNOLOGY, I RESEARCHED GENETICS... BUBASTIS WAS AN EARLY SUCCESS... AND TELEPORTATION.
SINCE JON PROVED TELEPORTATION POSSIBLE, WHY DEVELOP ELECTRIC CARS? MY RESEARCHES WERE VITAL... LIKE MY ISLAND, SECRETLY PURCHASED IN 1970.
THE ONLY HERO RETAINING PUBLIC SYMPATHY, I QUIT TWO YEARS BEFORE THE KEENE ACT, CONCENTRATING ON MY PLAN.
"UNABLE TO UNITE THE WORLD BY CONQUEST... ALEXANDER'S METHOD ...I WOULD TRICK IT; FRIGHTEN IT TOWARDS SALVATION WITH HISTORY'S GREATEST PRACTICAL JOKE.
"THAT'S WHAT UPSET THE COMEDIAN, WHEN AWARENESS OF MY SCHEME CRASHED IN UPON HIM:
"PROFESSIONAL JEALOUSY."
BLAKE'S MURDER. YOU CONFESS?
CONFESSION IMPLIES PENITENCE. I MERELY REGRET HIS ACCIDENTAL INVOLVEMENT.
RETURNING FROM NICARAGUA BY AIR, HE SPOTTED A SHIP DOCKING AT AN UNCHARTED ISLAND. SUSPECTING SANDINISTA BASES, HE RESOLVED TO INVESTIGATE.
"I PICTURE HIM, SWIMMING TO THE ISLAND, DAGGER IN TEETH, PENETRATING ITS INSTALLATIONS. WHAT HE FOUND MUST HAVE COME AS A TERRIBLE BLOW.
"IMAGINE... THE PERFECT FIGHTING MAN DISCOVERING A PLOT TO PUT AN END TO WAR...
"...AN END TO FIGHTING."
INSTITUTE FO EXTRASPATI STUD
THE EARTH
24


HOW COULD GENETICS AND TELEPORTATION END WAR ?
WELL, WITHOUT JON'S GUIDING MIND, TELEPORTATION PROVED LIMITED. ANYTHING LIVING DIED OF SHOCK UPON TRANSFER, OR MATERIALIZED IN AN OCCUPIED SPACE AND EXPLODED...
"...BUT THAT WASN'T WHAT BLAKE FOUND ON THE ISLAND. HE FOUND A COLLECTION OF MISSING ARTISTS AND SCIENTISTS, WORKING UPON A MONSTROUS NEW LIFE FORM.
"UPON LEARNING THE CREATURE'S INTENDED PURPOSE, BLAKE'S PRACTICED CYNICISM CRACKED."
THOUGH APPALLED, EXPOSING MY PLAN WOULD PRECIPITATE GREATER HORRORS PREVENTING HUMANITY'S SALVATION.
EVEN BLAKE BALKED AT THAT RESPONSIBILITY, TELLING ONLY MOLOCH, WHO HE KNEW WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND ...
...BUT I HAD MOLOCH'S PLACE BUGGED, AND I UNDERSTOOD PERFECTLY.
"THE PLAN BLAKE HAD UNCOVERED WAS THIS: TO FRIGHTEN GOVERNMENTS INTO CO-OPERATION, I WOULD CONVINCE THEM THAT EARTH FACED IMMINENT ATTACK BY BEINGS FROM ANOTHER WORLD.
"I'M AFRAID THE DISCOVERY RATHER DROVE THE WIND FROM HIS SAILS."
AHHA...
HA HA HA! ADRIAN, COME ON, WHAT...
YOU'RE SERIOUS ?
PERFECTLY. AN INTRACTABLE PROBLEM CAN ONLY BE RESOLVED BY STEPPING BEYOND CONVENTIONAL SOLUTIONS. ALEXANDER UNDERSTOOD THAT, TWO THOUSAND YEARS AGO, IN GORDIUM.
"BLAKE UNDERSTOOD, TOO. HE KNEW MY PLAN WOULD SUCCEED, THOUGH ITS SCALE TERRIFIED HIM. THAT'S WHY HE TOLD NOBODY. IT WAS TOO BIG TO DISCUSS...
"... BUT HE UNDERSTOOD.
"AT THE END, HE UNDERSTOOD.
"HE UNDERSTOOD THE PORTENTS, KNEW A DAZZLING TRANSFORMATION WAS AT HAND FOR MANKIND.
UTOPIA
"THE BRUTAL WORLD HE'D RELISHED WOULD SIMPLY CEASE TO BE, ITS FIERCE AND BRAWLING DENIZENS RUSHING TO JOIN THE MASTODON IN OBSOLESCENCE...
Gunga Din
"IN EXTINCTION."
25


AFTER BLAKE, I NEUTRALIZED JON. STOLEN PSYCHIATRIC REPORTS INDICATED HIS MENTAL WITHDRAWAL. THE CANCER ALLEGATIONS MADE IT PHYSICAL.
BY THEN, RORSCHACH'S MASK KILLER HUNT NEEDED STOPPING. MY OWN "ASSASSINATION", CONFIRMING HIS ERRONEOUS THEORY, PLACED ME BEYOND SUSPICION.
"I'D HIRED MY OWN KILLER THROUGH A THIRD PARTY. WHEN I FED HIM THE CYANIDE CAPSULE, PERHAPS HE REALIZED THIS.
"I KNEW ONLY TRIUMPH... NOTHING NOW STOOD BETWEEN ME AND MY GOAL. HUMANITY'S FATE RESTED SAFELY IN MY HANDS."
ADRIAN, THIS IS CRAZY. WHO'D BELIEVE AN ALIEN INVASION?
HITLER SAID PEOPLE SWALLOW LIES EASILY, PROVIDED THEY'RE BIG ENOUGH. I PLANNED TO BUILD MY MONSTER, TELEPORT IT TO A CERTAIN DESTINATION...
SAID TELEPORTATION UNWORKABLE.
"IT WORKS FINE, ASSUMING YOU WANT THINGS TO EXPLODE ON ARRIVAL.
"TELEPORTED TO NEW YORK, MY CREATURE'S DEATH WOULD TRIGGER MECHANISMS WITHIN ITS MASSIVE BRAIN, CLONED FROM A HUMAN SENSITIVE...
"...THE RESULTANT PSYCHIC SHOCKWAVE KILLING HALF THE CITY."
ADRIAN, I'M SORRY...YOU NEED HELP. I KNOW THIS "HALF NEW YORK" STUFF IS BULLSHIT, BUT I'M STILL GLAD WE GOT HERE BEFORE YOU GOT DEEPER INTO THIS MESS.
CHRIST, YOU SERIOUSLY PLANNED ALL THIS MAD SCIENTIST STUFF?
"I MEAN, WHEN WAS THIS HOPELESS BLACK FANTASY SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN?
"WHEN WERE YOU PLANNING TO DO IT?"
Gunga Diner
POLICE
26

"DO IT?"
DAN, I'M NOT A REPUBLIC SERIAL VILLAIN. DO YOU SERIOUSLY THINK I'D EXPLAIN MY MASTER-STROKE IF THERE REMAINED THE SLIGHTEST CHANCE OF YOU AFFECTING ITS OUTCOME?
I DID IT THIRTY-FIVE MINUTES AGO.

NEW YORK

INSTITUTE FOR EXTRASPATIAL STUDIES
NEWS

My name is
Ozymandias,
king of kings:
Look on my works,
ye mighty,
and despair!

—*Ozymandias*
Percy
Bysshe
Shelley

AFTER THE MASQUERADE:

Superstyle and the art of humanoid watching.

DOUG ROTH VISITS ANTARCTICA TO INTERVIEW ADRIAN VEIDT

VEIDT: "The frightening thing about the campaign to re-elect the president is that in the wake of the victory in Vietnam, I don't see how they can fail. C.R.E.E.P.! What a terrible acronym. I wonder who coined that one? Somebody who watched too many 'Man From U.N.C.L.E.' episodes in the sixties . . . Liddy, or one of those other Washington humanoids."

"Humanoids." I'm sitting talking with a retired superhero in a glass dome filled with tropical flowers and hummingbirds, while outside the antarctic wind builds snowdrifts against the glass. I would imagine myself beyond surprise by this point, yet the sudden use of such an odd term is startling. Have I detected a hitherto unnoticed contempt for mere humans behind that eminently likable golden facade? Why "humanoids"? I put this to him, and he chuckles.

VEIDT: "I'm sorry, it's a sort of one-man private joke. I've been referring to Nixon's close subordinates as humanoids since I heard about the banquet . . . and this is true, I promise . . . where one of the presidential aides spilled a glass of water over Vice-President Ford. The aide was incredibly apologetic, obviously, but Ford just smiled and said 'Oh, that's okay. Nobody's human.' (*Laughter*) I've called 'em humanoids ever since."

Continued

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The laughter of Adrian Veidt is deep and rich, filled with a warmth I hadn't anticipated as the jet he'd arranged lowered me gently from the blank white antarctic sky towards the dangerously small-looking black hyphen of the landing strip, set into the endless pack ice far below. The landscape was hard and cold, too big to get to grips with, and I expected much the same of any man who'd choose to live in it.

The plane was met at the landing strip by three enthusiastically friendly Vietnamese men who led me between obelisks of dark marble with rolling purple highlights towards the fortress dominating the nude white reaches beyond.

Servants? My liberal sensibilities recoiled at the concept with a predictable knee-jerk. Later, however, on learning that the men had been Vietcong refugees in danger of losing their lives in the purges following America's victory without Veidt's intervention, I wasn't so sure. Since Antarctica is owned by no nation, the men are theoretically safe from extradition, and their nominal boss seems to treat them more as respected friends than as lackeys. Certainly, they themselves seem deliriously happy with both their lot and their landlord.

"Mr. Veidt has made the effort to understand our culture. He talks to us often concerning our religious beliefs, asking many questions." The man who tells me this is sincere and heartfelt in his testimonial, showing an almost fatherly protective anxiety that this magazine should not misrepresent his employer:

"He is not one of your pop music stars. He does not inject drugs, or treat young women badly. Make sure that you say that."

When we reach the fortress, Veidt is still completing his daily workout in a gymnasium of vast, almost dreamlike proportions, where parallel bars meet at infinity. I'm cordially invited to watch while he finishes up, and as I observe that perfect swiss-watch of a body twirling and circling above me in easy defiance of gravity, all my earlier doubts concerning Veidt's accessibility return.

There he is, right up there above me: the man. Adrian Veidt. Ozyman . . . whoops. Uh-uh. We don't call him that anymore, do we? The mask is gone, but as he loops the high bar in slow, graceful centrifuge he still wears the golden leotard, and the headband. Every girlfriend I've had in the past four years has wanted to lay this guy, more than Jagger, more than Springsteen or D'Eath or any of those also-rans, and now here I am, squinting up at him, and yes, goddamn it, I have to goddamned admit that he looks like a goddamned god! I can't quite believe he'll submit to being interviewed by someone so obviously mired in the dregs of the gene pool as myself . . .

. . . but here he comes, dropping to the floor, picking up the purple towel that I realize later is actually the tunic of his costume, and wiping himself beneath the arms with it in a distinctly Homo sapiens fashion. He's walking towards me, his smile somewhere between Jackie Coogan and J.F.K., sticking out a hand that grips mine strongly enough to make me glad it's friendly. He glances towards the gymnasium windows, outside which a blizzard seems to be commencing and smiles again.

"Not the sort of snow you're used to in California, Mr. Roth."

A coke joke! Adrian Veidt, Ozy-freakin'-mandias himself has just told me a coke joke! Whoooo-ee! We fall easily into conversation from that point on, and after he's dressed he takes me for a tour of his fortress, opulent beyond the wildest dreams of Versailles. We end up in a large section of the main hall where one wall appears to be entirely covered with TV screens, all tuned to different channels. It is here that we hold our interview, and I notice his eyes often drifting across the riot of clashing images as we speak. It's only after I express worries concerning background noise and my recording equipment that he thinks to turn the sound of the multiple televisions down. They don't seem to affect his concentration at all.

Before launching into my interview spiel, I take a breath and remember why I'm here. Almost lost in the cacophony surrounding the old Trickster's Constitutional amendment scam, one of America's best-respected and most consistently left-leaning superheroes quietly retired from crimefighting to pursue a career in business. When this magazine phoned him to ask why, he kindly offered to fly me up to his antarctic retreat where we could conduct the interview in comfort. Exhaling, I press the record button and begin.

NOVA: So, how do you get to be a superhero? Were your parents rich? I mean, did that give you advantages?

VEIDT: No more than I could help. My mother left me a lot of money when she died, but I gave it to charity when I was seventeen. I wanted to prove that I could accomplish anything I wanted starting from absolutely nothing. Also, I wanted to free myself of concern for money. Consequently, it's never been a problem for me. To answer your question, you get to be a superhero by believing in the hero within you and summoning him or her forth by an act of will. Believing in yourself and your own potential is the first step to realizing that potential. Alternatively, you could do as Jon did: Fall into a nuclear reactor and hope for the best. On the whole, I think I prefer to stick to my own methods. (*Laughter*)

NOVA: You'll forgive me for saying so, but isn't that philosophy a little Norman Vincent Peale? That self-realization stuff? How exactly do you exploit that potential to the degree that you obviously have?

VEIDT: The disciplines of physical exercise, meditation and study aren't terribly esoteric. The means to attain a capability far beyond that of the so-called ordinary person are within reach of

everyone, if their desire and their will are strong enough. I have studied science, art, religion and a hundred different philosophies. Anyone could do as much. By applying what you learn and ordering your thoughts in an intelligent manner it is possible to accomplish almost anything. Possible for the "ordinary person." There's a notion I'd like to see buried: the ordinary person. Ridiculous. There is no ordinary person.

NOVA: Returning to your costumed career, why did you quit?

VEIDT: There were a number of reasons, but I suppose basically it boiled down to my increasing uncertainty about the role of the costumed hero in the seventies. What does fighting crime mean, exactly? Does it mean upholding the law when a woman shoplifts to feed her children, or does it mean struggling to uncover the ones who, quite legally, have brought about her poverty? Yes, I've busted drug rings and been accused of being an establishment pawn for doing so . . . that happened a lot in the sixties. I've also uncovered plots by breakaway extremist factions within the Pentagon, for example the plot to release some unpleasantly specific diseases upon the population of Africa, the exposure of which led to the *New Frontiersman* denouncing me as a "Puppet of Peking" on the strength of my youthful travels through the East. I guess I've just reached a point where I've started to wonder whether all the grandstanding and fighting individual evils does much good for the world as a whole. Those evils are just symptoms of an overall sickness of the human spirit, and I don't believe you can cure a disease by suppressing its symptoms. That whole *Contac-400* approach to our society's problems, I despair of it. It doesn't work. Maybe as a businessman I can do more good, on a more meaningful scale.

NOVA: What sort of world do you see it being, in the future?

VEIDT: That depends upon us . . . each and every one of us. Futurology interests me perhaps more than any other single subject, and as such I devote a great deal of time to its study. Even so, technology is progressing at an ever-accelerating pace, and by early next century I would hesitate to predict *any* limitations upon what we might be capable of. I would say without hesitation that a new world is within our grasp, filled with unimaginable experiences and possibilities, if only we want it badly enough. Not a utopia . . . I don't believe that any species could continue to grow and keep from stagnation without *some* adversity . . . but a society with a more human basis, where the problems that beset us are at least *new* problems.

NOVA: You don't think there's a possibility we may have damaged the environment beyond repair, or that we might someday have a fatal nuclear showdown with the Soviets?

Continued

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Veidt cont.

VEIDT: Of course. Of course I do. I'd be ignoring the facts if I didn't accept those things as strong possibilities. As I said, it all depends on us, on whether we, individually, want Armageddon or a new world of fabulous, limitless potential. That's not such an obvious question as it seems. I believe there are some people who really do want, if only subconsciously, an end to the world. They want to be spared the responsibilities of maintaining that world, to be spared the effort of imagination needed to realize such a future. And of course, there are other people who want very much to live. I see twentieth century society as a sort of race between enlightenment and extinction. In one lane you have the four horsemen of the apocalypse . . .

NOVA: . . . and in the other?

VEIDT: The seventh cavalry. (*Laughter*)

NOVA: Changing the subject entirely, do you listen to much music? I wondered what your tastes might be, as a superhero . . .

VEIDT: I like electronic music. That's a very superhero-ey thing to like, I suppose, isn't it? I like avant-garde music in general. Cage, Stockhausen, Penderecki, Andrew Lang, Pierre Henry. Terry Riley is very good. Oh, and I've heard some interesting new music from Jamaica . . . a sort of hybrid between electronic music and reggae. It's a fascinating study in the new musical forms generated when a largely pre-technological culture is given access to modern recording techniques without the technological preconceptions that we've allowed to accumulate, limiting our vision. It's called dub music. You'd like it, I'm sure.

NOVA: How do you get on with the rest of the superhero fraternity? Some of them seem very right-wing in contrast with your own stance. I'm thinking of Rorschach, the Comedian, Dr. Manhattan . . .

VEIDT: *Jon*? Right-wing? (*Laughs*) If there's one thing in this cosmos that that man *isn't* capable of doing it's having a political bias. Believe me . . . you have to meet him to understand. I mean, which do you prefer, red ants or black ants?

NOVA: Uh . . .? Well, I don't have any particular preference . . .

VEIDT: Exactly. Well, imagine how Jon feels. Rorschach, I don't know very well. I believe he's a man of great integrity, but he seems to see the world in very black and white, Manichean terms. I personally believe that to be an intellectual limitation.

NOVA: And the Comedian? I understand there's no love lost between you. I heard that he beat you in combat, back when you were just starting out . . .

VEIDT: Yes, well, that was a case of mistaken identity and general misunderstanding. For some reason it happens a lot when costumed crimefighters meet for the first time. (*Laughter*)

NOVA: But you and the Comedian don't like each other?

VEIDT: My, but you're determined, aren't you? (*Laughs*) No, we're not great friends. It's largely a political difference. He sees me as an intellectual dilettante dabbling in national affairs that don't concern me. I see him as an amoral mercenary allying himself to whichever political faction seems likely to grant him the greatest license. The difference is as simple and as profound as that.

NOVA: There's no general sense of disillusionment with your fellow crimefighters, then?

VEIDT: Not at all. Some of my dearest friends are numbered amongst them. I wish them all nothing but luck in the years that lie ahead.

NOVA: In closing, you've often been referred to in the press as the world's smartest man. Is that true, and does it bother you?

VEIDT: No, that isn't true, but it's very flattering and I don't mind a bit. If somebody wants to call me the world's best-groomed man, then hey, that's okay too. (*Laughs*) No, no, I don't mind being the smartest man in the world. I just wish it wasn't this one. ◘

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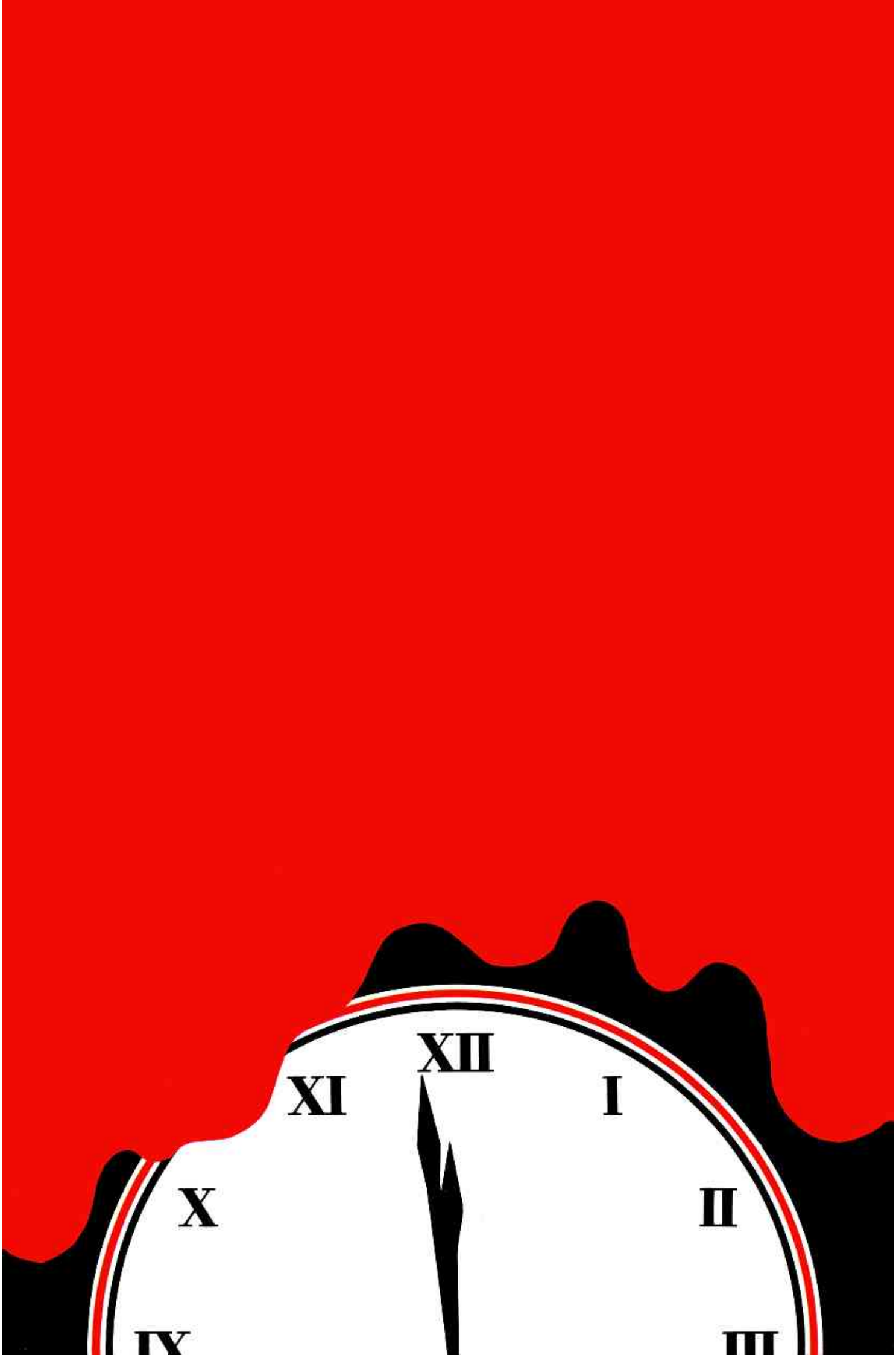
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